

A Fair and Appreciated announcement, albeit incomplete

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As he prepared to "hang up the gloves," outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden decided to fulfill some of his campaign promises regarding Cuba. During his presidency, he could have – to borrow baseball jargon – "hit a grand slam" and made history, but he did not.

Undoubtedly, the announcement from the White House, though very limited in scope, was welcomed by the Cuban people and millions around the world, including within the U.S., who have long condemned the barbaric blockade against Cuba.

Specifically, Washington's announcement includes three key points:

1. Removing Cuba from the U.S. State Department's list of countries allegedly sponsoring terrorism.
2. Using presidential prerogative to block legal actions in U.S. courts under Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.
3. Eliminating the restricted list of Cuban entities that designates

certain institutions as off-limits for U.S. citizens and entities, which has negatively impacted third countries.

This decision from the Oval Office effectively ends specific coercive measures that, along with many others, cause severe harm to the Cuban population, have extraterritorial reach, and violate the human rights of all Cubans.

However, several examples show that significant issues remain. The “pirate-like” pursuit of fuel supplies and merchant ships docking in Cuba persists. The harassment of legitimate international medical cooperation agreements with other countries continues. Financial transactions involving Cuba are still punished, among a long list of other injustices.

Cuba remains a forbidden destination for U.S. citizens, and U.S. corporations and their subsidiaries are prohibited from trading with the island, except in very limited, heavily regulated cases. Additionally, individuals and entities from any nation seeking to trade, invest, or even visit the island continue to face harassment, intimidation, and threats.

Looking back to May 2002, former U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton’s speech laid the groundwork for George W. Bush’s administration to fabricate a false link between Cuba and terrorism. This sought to connect Cuba with the violent events of September 11. Since then, successive U.S. administrations have used Cuba’s inclusion on the infamous list as a political tool of pressure.

It was not until 2015 that Barack Obama’s administration removed Cuba from the list. However, in the waning days of Donald Trump’s presidency, on January 12, 2021, just as he prepared to “hang up the gloves,” Cuba was once again designated a state sponsor of terrorism.

Nothing justified Cuba’s continued presence on this fabricated list. Havana is a signatory to 19 international agreements related to combating terrorism and has consistently honored these commitments, elevating this responsibility to constitutional status in 2019.

Despite enduring economic strangulation, slander, and various forms of aggression for over 60 years, the steadfastness of the Cuban people

has been their only guarantee of survival against the threat posed by the world's greatest power.

Throughout it all, Cuba has maintained its willingness to engage in dialogue based on mutual respect and international law for peaceful coexistence between nations, without conceding even the slightest compromise to its independence and sovereignty.

Uncertainty looms over these decisions, raising questions about their sustainability, particularly as the incoming president, Donald Trump, has vowed a tougher stance toward the Cuban government.

On the other hand, the resilience of the rebel island, the militant international solidarity, the global approval of Biden's announcement, and the growing U.S. opposition to the economic war against Cuba weigh on the scale.

JUST, BUT UNRELATED

On a day filled with significant events, and in line with what can be considered a tradition in this matter, First Secretary of the Communist Party and President of the Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, confirmed Tuesday that the Cuban government made the *"unilateral and sovereign decision to grant freedom to 553 individuals sentenced for various offenses."*

This decision is unrelated to the announcement made the same day by outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden. As noted earlier, it is rooted in the close and fluid relations with Pope Francis, aligned with the spirit of the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025 declared by His Holiness, which has just begun.

The individuals benefiting from the measure were duly sentenced for various offenses under Cuban law, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This is not an amnesty, nor a measure aimed at benefiting a specific group, contrary to the smear campaign being promoted from Miami. Some will receive conditional release, others a change of sentence, among other measures provided for under Cuban law, depending on

individual circumstances.

The statement notes that President Díaz-Canel communicated the decision to the Holy Father in a letter sent to the Vatican in early January, explaining that *"the releases are carried out based on a careful analysis, following the various modalities provided for by the legislation, and as part of the just and humanitarian nature of Cuba's penal and prison systems."*

"We maintain a respectful, frank, and constructive relationship with the Vatican and the Holy Father, which facilitates decisions such as this one, within the requirements of current legislation, the humanitarian principles of Cuba's justice system, and the need to uphold domestic order and citizen security," the Declaration concluded.

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