

EYE ON CUBA



ANNUAL REPORT



2019



People in Need

Center for Human Rights and Democracy

Prague, January 2019

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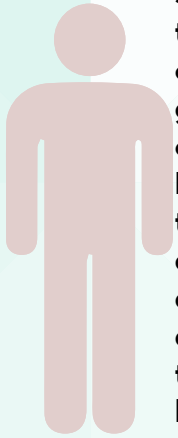
The Eye on Cuba project was initiated during the year 2012 and published its first case in March 2013.

The year 2019 has proven to be one of great importance and has brought about visible changes in Cuba. During the year of the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the island has carried out some political changes at least in form, although not in substance. The new Constitution, which was approved on February 24th by 86% of voters, leaves the system so tightly bound that the handovers of positions of power cannot be separated from the established script. The appointment of Manuel Marrero Cruz as Prime Minister on December 21st, a position reestablished for the first time since its disappearance in 1976, is presumably a change in the governing structure, but it remains to be seen if this will really mean much in terms of the real situation of the country.

The Cuban people have been in dire straits, as our overview of the year will show. A tornado devastated part of Havana on January 27th that left many dead and wounded. Throughout the first half of the year, food shortages began to occur, and in part of the second half, there were also shortages of drinking water. Adding insult to injury, the lack of gasoline resulted in a severe fuel crisis that affected transportation throughout the island. As a positive counterpoint, the government decided to raise the wages of almost half of the public sector workers to try to alleviate these difficulties.

The Cuban government has not fared much better, the drop in the number of allies and sympathetic governments in the region, combined with the difficult situation that Venezuela has been going through, has put the executive on the spot and forced it to make difficult decisions (especially in the area of economic policy). The northern neighbor has not made it easy for the Cuban regime either, the tightening of sanctions and the measures adopted by the Trump administration have increased the differences between the two countries, deepening the economic difficulties on the largest of the Antilles. These measures include: the end of the suspension of Title III of the controversial Helms-Burton law, which allows for the filing of claims for expropriated properties and frightens off foreign investment, while also putting limitations of remittances and restrictions on the number of flights between both countries.





The human rights situation deteriorated in 2019 in comparison with previous years. While things started getting drastically worse in 2018, this trend continued and even intensified during 2019. Civil and political rights were the most affected by this, as the regime prioritized arbitrary arrests and increased the number of people who were not allowed to leave the country without justifying the reasons. In terms of social, economic and cultural rights, these are still often better when compared to what other countries in the region offer, but the worsening of the economy has once again led to the reduction of basic services and their quality.

The constitutional process limited the participation of independent civil society, since the assemblies that drafted the proposals were not very inclusive and far from ideologically diverse. Human rights, which are mentioned twice in the Constitution, will be guaranteed by the State (article 41). This clashes with the data collected by Eye on Cuba, which point to the State and law enforcement as the main threats to human rights. Despite this, the Constitution presumes to be, in theory, a step forward in terms of certain civil rights. However, this constitution did not establish a court that guarantees civil rights or supervises the constitutionality of the norms consistent with them.

It is worth noting the first authorized protest in support of animal rights that took place on April 7th. Those who attended the LGBTIQ rights demonstration on May 11th, on the other hand, suffered personal attacks and being detained after the surprise cancellation of the march. UNPACU activists called for people to take to the streets on September 8th, which led to a wave of repression and culminated in José Daniel Ferrer, the group leader on the island, being taken into custody on October 2nd - as of the end of the year, he was still incarcerated.

The arbitrary detaining of journalists and the blocking of websites continued, reducing free access to information. This practice was supplemented by the approval of Decree Law No. 389 on virtual surveillance, which should be seen as a serious attack on individuals' right to privacy. On September 4th and November 15th, special rapporteurs from the United Nations sent communications to the Cuban government regarding the worrying situation of journalists and political prisoners, in addition to their concerns about the practice of forced expatriation and the lack of guarantees of other rights.



EYE ON CUBA DATABASE



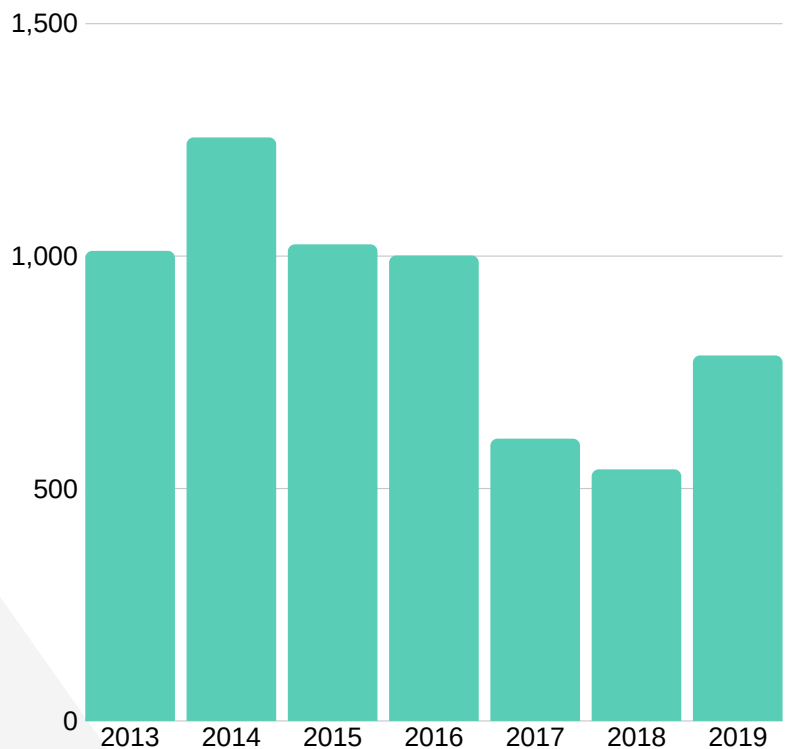
The Eye on Cuba network is in charge of properly collecting and documenting human rights violations. The defenders who comprise it try to support the victims as much as possible.

There are other initiatives dedicated to collecting information on the violations of these rights that use different methods and pursue different ends. For example, some try to collect as many cases as possible, others focus on some specific rights. All of these are valid, and often complementary.

The intention of this database is not to collect information on every violation, but to collect a sample of well-documented and verified cases that represent a sufficiently wide representation of the situation on the island. This sample makes it possible to study the cases, their characteristics, how they evolve and what similarities they share.

The database also stores all possible victim data, although this is not always publicly available. And it collects the identities of the perpetrators in case they could be used for future accountability.

Likewise, the data is reflected on the page www.eyoncuba.org that publicly shows the cases, seeking to raise awareness about the human rights situation on the island and to reduce the repression being exerted on various groups.



The number of documented cases by Eye on Cuba over the last 7 years

6.219

Documented Cases of
Human Rights
Violations

2019 IN NUMBERS

785

Throughout the year 2019, 785 cases were reported by members of the Eye on Cuba network.

15

The network registered and documented abuses in each of the 15 provinces that make up the island of Cuba.

354

Number of victims who have received psychological support from the network.

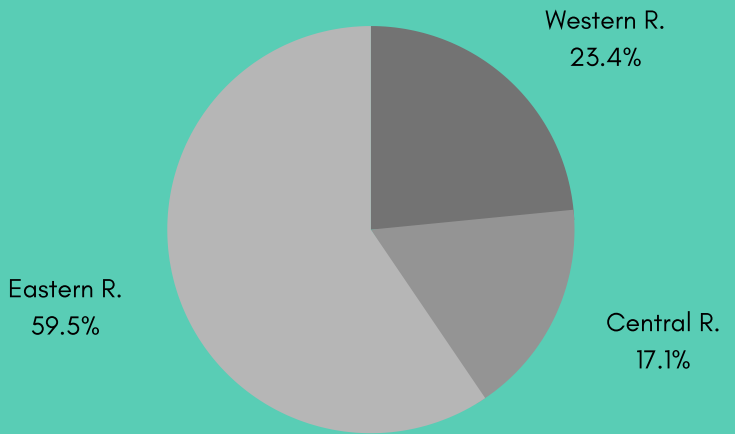
30

Number of victims that have received financial support from the network.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION AND TIMEFRAME

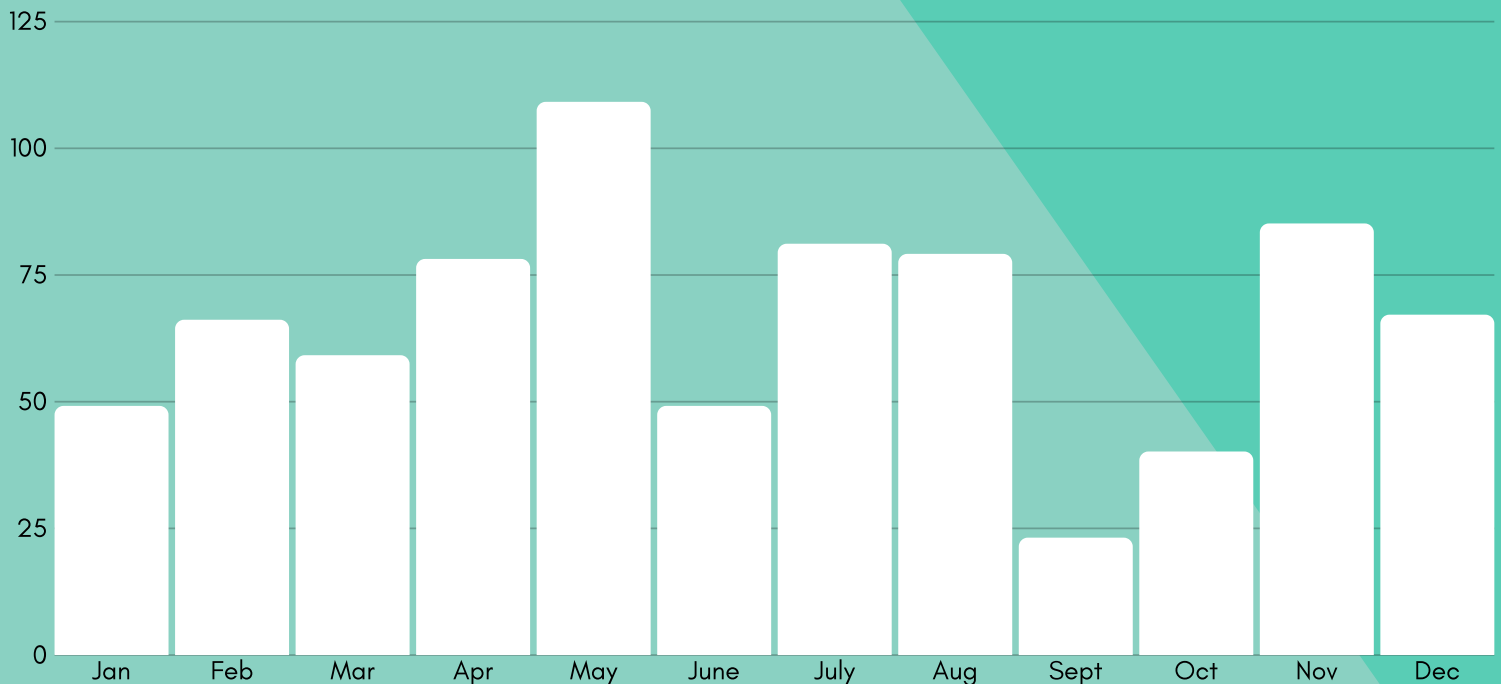
Regional Distribution

Documented cases within the three major regions on the island. There is a higher number of incidences in the eastern region, where the police presence is greater and the network of collaborators is more numerous.



Distribution by Province

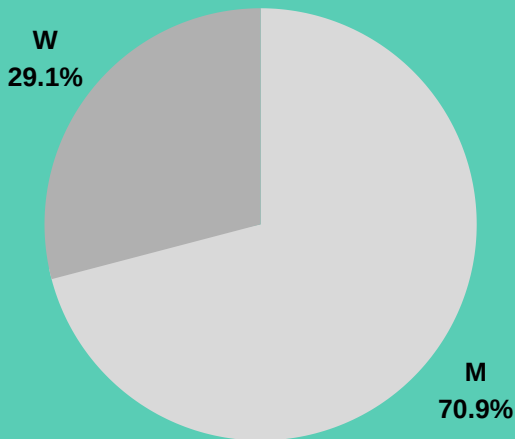
- Guantánamo: 391
- Havana: 114
- Villa Clara: 65
- Holguín: 58
- Matanzas: 40
- Cienfuegos: 28
- Sancti Spíritus: 25
- Pinar del Río: 21
- Granma: 11
- Camagüey: 9
- Ciego de Ávila: 7
- Artemisa: 6
- Santiago: 4
- Las Tunas: 3
- Mayabeque: 3



Monthly Distribution

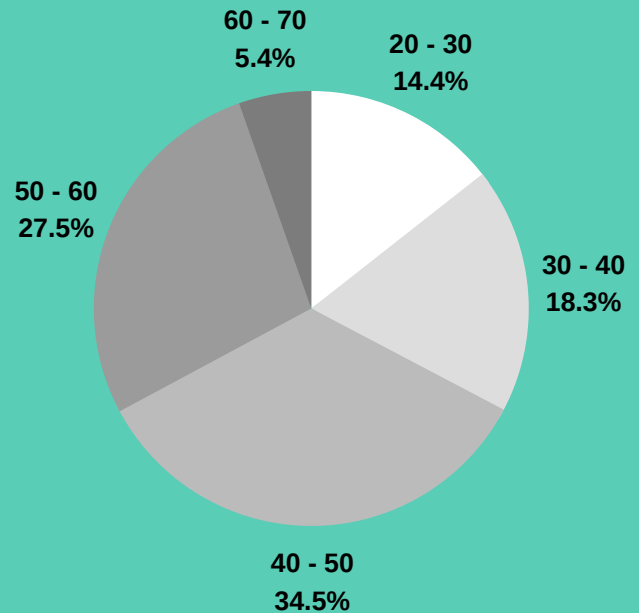


THE IDENTITY OF THE VICTIMS



Differences by Gender

The numbers show that in general it is men who are the most affected. However, sexism continues to be a major problem in the country. Many voices are asking for special protection for women due to discrimination and the high rates of domestic violence against women. The number of feminist initiatives in Cuba continues to grow despite the official denials by the government.



Differences by Age

People between the ages of 40 and 60 are more likely to not see their rights respected. Rights violations that affect people over 70 and under 20 are unusual when compared to the violations suffered by people between this range of ages.

80% Percent of the victims that are activists.

47% Percentage of cases in which the abuse took place when the victim was doing activist work.



AFFECTED RIGHTS



In 2019, civil and political rights were the most violated rights. At the top of the list are arbitrary arrests, restrictions on the freedom of movement and limitations on freedom of expression. Complaints about the lack of health services and housing, along with the denial of access to education for certain people, were among the main violations of individuals economic, social and cultural rights.

131

Cases in which the right to assembly was violated, all those present were detained or were not allowed to go to the place where those affected were supposed to gather.

302

Cases in which the victims were arbitrarily detained. These are usually short-term arrests. Sometimes victims are simply abandoned miles from their homes with no means for returning.

187

Cases in which the right to freedom of movement and to move within the island was violated.

191

Cases in which the right to freedom of expression and opinion was directly restricted. Attacks on independent journalists have increased over the year.

65

Cases in which individuals were not allowed to leave the country. In accordance with Decree-Law No. 302, the authorities reserve the right to prevent someone from leaving the island for "reasons of national security" or "in the public interest."





OUTREACH & SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS



@EYEonCUBA

The Twitter account started in April 2013 and currently has more than two thousand followers



@EYECUBA

Our Facebook page has continued to expand and is used to campaign and promote the work of the database

www.eyeoncuba.org

15.285 Recorded page views

7.502 New users

Page Views Per Country

THE UNITED STATES

SPAIN

CUBA

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba:

https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cuba_2019.pdf?lang=en

European Parliament Resolution on Cuba:

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2019-0200_EN.html

Resolution 73/8 of the United Nations General Assembly:

<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/8>

Report from Cuba Against the Blockade 2019 (Spanish only):

<http://www.minrex.gob.cu/sites/default/files/2019-09/Cuba%20vs%20Bloqueo.pdf>

Documents and Sessions – Universal Periodic Review (Cuba):

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/CUindex.aspx>

Human Rights Watch World Report (Cuba):

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cuba>

Amnesty International Report (Cuba):

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/cuba/report-cuba/>

Report on Psychological Repression in Cuba:

<http://cubalog.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ENGLISH.pdf>

2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cuba:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/cuba/>

Annual Report from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights:

<http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2018/docs/IA2018cap.4b.CU-en.pdf>

Country Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda - Cuba (Spanish only):

<https://bit.ly/2Tux2LN>

Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2019:

https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/global_analysis_2019_web.pdf

UN Communication regarding Harassment and Forced Expatriation: (Spanish only):

<https://bit.ly/32UuUji>

IACHR and UN Communication on the Case of Roberto de Jesús Quiñones Haces: (Spanish only):

<https://bit.ly/2TPI7XY>

The current political and legislative changes in Cuba are creating an unprecedented opportunity to bring about profound changes on the island, being able to ensure progress, prosperity and respect for all human rights.

We urge the Cuban government to begin taking the necessary steps for reforming the country in various areas. Opening the doors to independent civil society so as to achieve a more plural, inclusive society, in which no one may be discriminated against or punished for their ideas. To allow greater private initiative, so that the private economy for Cubans and the country in general may benefit. Carry out a reform of the judicial and legislative systems, thus guaranteeing the independence of the one and the true representation of the Cuban people in the other. Likewise, the executive should look after the general interest of the people and not put ideals before the freedom and well-being of its own people.

The opening of society, facilitating the participation of the citizenry, private initiative and the separation of powers, must not be at odds with the maximum guarantee of economic and social rights, but must also add respect and protection of other rights, especially in this case, the civil and political ones.

IN APPRECIATION

The year 2019 has been an especially hard one for Cuban civil society. Some of the people who have supported us have had to put their work on hold and direct their efforts to improve their personal circumstances and those of their families due to the difficulties on the island. People in Need would like to thank all of the collaborators of the Eye on Cuba network, as well as all the people who help or have helped in one way or another, for their dedication, support, courage and determination. Every small act contributed by each of these people and organizations helps to keep this initiative alive, improving the scope and impact of the work year after year.

More importantly, we reiterate our unconditional support to all Cubans who have seen their rights violated. We must always remember that human rights are above ideology and political orientation, and therefore, ideological or economic confrontations should not be used as an excuse for their violation.



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