

Why we Interfere in Cuba

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In the Center for the Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL) we believe that the countries in the region, especially those who have experienced hard authoritarian dictatorships (including the one in Argentina), must lead the democratic opening in Cuba and renounce violations of human rights. Fidel Castro has been in power for so many years, among other reasons, because there has not been enough international pressure and it is mainly the Latin American countries whose debt is most outstanding to the Cuban population.

Therefore, from now on, we should make every effort to get political leaders, intellectual leaders and journalists in Latin America involved in the cause, as they have the most influence in the region. Cuba, as Fernando Ruiz correctly points out, often marks the limit of democratization. The first question we can hear in Argentina is: Why do you get involved in Cuba?

Since in Argentina it is a crime to criticize Castro's dictatorship, CADAL rather promotes democratic strengthening, the rule of law and economic freedom in Latin America.

There are many programs and areas CADAL concentrates on, such as the Latin American political analysis program, strengthening democracy, economics, the rule of law and also other special projects. The first of these special projects is Pro Cuba Libre, a project in which we work together with Argentina's Commission for Human Rights in Cuba. The president of this group is María Reviriego, Argentina's pioneer in Cuban human rights, someone who has done a great deal for the liberation of many political prisoners, ex-prisoners, exiles; people who have then gone to further aid the liberation process. Now we take on the baton of the brave work she has done as she raised her voice during the 80s, when Alfonsín's government showed a lot of sympathy for Castro's dictatorship. CADAL was established in 2003 when the region was going through some very difficult moments so as to promote those principles which do not have much support in Latin America and are quite unstable. These are principles which form, among other issues, the basis of our work.

When the Minister of Foreign Affairs Rafael Antonio Bielsa himself said before the Commission for Foreign Affairs that Argentina would not condemn Cuba in the UN, he justified himself by stating that "if you look a few blocks from here you'll see that human rights are also violated". This is what our minister of Foreign Affairs said, a lawyer and a man who respects the constitution yet who cannot see clearly that the violation of human rights in Cuba is a policy of the state. This is what we say when we are asked why we care about Cuba. No country or government can totally avoid the violation of human rights. Governments and Constitutions of the States should prevent the violation of human rights and respect the rights fundamental to all governments, whose mission is to ensure that these rights are respected.

In Cuba, state policy violates human rights. There is a Constitution, a Penal Code, and laws such as Act 88 under which the majority of the last groups of detainees were incarcerated in March 2003. This makes evident the continued violation of such rights. Cuba is the only country where the principles promoted by CADAL are banned. If we wanted to do the same things in Cuba as we do in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile or other countries, we could not operate and in fact would be imprisoned as was the journalist Fernando Ruiz. Therefore we have a big commitment to Cuba, the only country in the region where our principles are prohibited.

However, we have to bear in mind that Castro's dictatorship has great support in Argentina and is regarded with great indulgence by Latin America. That's why by promoting the democratic opening in Cuba we contribute to the strengthening of the democratic values in Argentina and Latin America at large.

One of our projects is aimed specially at the issue of Cuba and offers our solidarity and support to all those who

are denied a basic principle of liberal democracy — those that are persecuted because they express their opinions, opinions that are different from those of the government. Those of us who have suffered a dictatorship have the greatest commitment to those who today are being unjustly condemned to many years in prison after brief trials for their peaceful and democratic activities. If we do not work constantly, regularly and continuously, twenty years will pass and innocent people will have served their sentences, be it under Castro or under one of the murderers who are part of his regime.