Cuba

New Castro, Same Cuba
Political Prisoners in the Post-Fidel Era
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In July 2006, Fidel Castro handed over control of the Cuban government to his brother Raúl Castro. Rather than dismantle the country’s repressive machinery, Raúl Castro has kept it firmly in place and fully active. Scores of political prisoners arrested under Fidel Castro continue to languish in Cuba’s prisons, and Raúl Castro’s government has used draconian laws and sham trials to incarcerate scores more who have dared to exercise their fundamental freedoms.

The Cuban government has relied in particular on a “dangerousness” provision of the Criminal Code that allows authorities to imprison individuals before they have committed a crime, on the suspicion that they might commit an offense in the future. This report documents more than 40 cases of human rights defenders, journalists, and nonviolent political activists imprisoned for “dangerousness” under Raúl Castro.

Based on a fact-finding mission to the island and more than 60 in-depth interviews, New Castro, Same Cuba describes the everyday forms of repression applied to those who criticize the government, such as beatings and public acts of repudiation; the rampant due process abuses these individuals endure when brought to trial; and the cruel, inhumane treatment they suffer at the hands of prison officials.

Cuba will not curb its abuses unless it is pressured by the international community to do so. Unfortunately, the US embargo has imposed indiscriminate hardship on the Cuban people while doing nothing to improve the situation of human rights on the island. Meanwhile, the policies of the European Union, Canada, and Latin American countries have done little to hold Raúl Castro’s government accountable for its repressive practices.

To remedy this continuing failure, this report lays out a proposal for the United States, the EU, Canada, and Latin American allies to forge a multilateral approach towards Cuba, which will exert targeted pressure on the Raúl Castro government to release all political prisoners.