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# EYE on CUBA

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



**EYE on CUBA**

Monitoring Human Rights Abuses in Cuba

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[www.eyeoncuba.org](http://www.eyeoncuba.org)



People in Need

Center for Human Rights  
and Democracy

Prague, March 2021

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The project EYE on CUBA started  
to be developed in 2012

and published its first case in March 2013

**THE YEAR 2020 HAS PROVEN TO BE ANOTHER YEAR FULL OF COMPLEXITIES FOR CUBA.** The COVID-19 pandemic, shortages, increased repression, and persistent sanctions marked the lives of the Cuban population throughout the year, while they simultaneously affected the decisions of the Cuban regime.

Over the last two years there has been ample evidence that the Cuban Constitution of 2019 has not represented a legislative or material change in the guarantee of human rights in Cuba. A clear example of this are the restrictions imposed by Decree-Law 370 of 2019 on the performance of the rights to political participation, freedom of expression, privacy, and the right of association in the use of information and communication technologies.

Dissenting groups were also victims of restrictions on their fundamental rights and freedoms. For example, the members of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) have been subjected to several months of constant arbitrary detentions, exorbitant fines, and raids on their homes after their leader, José Daniel Ferrer, was convicted in April. He was transferred soon after and told he should serve his sentence of more than 4 years under house arrest. To make matters worse, a security fence was put up around Ferrer's house, which means that these members of the opposition were prevented from being able to meet there, despite the fact that this space functions as the organization's headquarters.

What's more, after the release of Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, an artist and member of the San Isidro Movement (MSI) in March, the artists in this group continued to be victims of constant attacks by the Cuban State.

These attacks reached their peak at the end of November, when artists, intellectuals, and activists from the MSI began a protest against the arrest and conviction of their fellow musician Denis Solis, who had been sentenced to 8 months in prison for "contempt of authority." During the days in which the protests lasted, the protesters at the MSI headquarters



**The COVID-19 pandemic, shortages, increased repression, and persistent sanctions marked the lives of the Cuban population throughout the year**

were cordoned off by the police, and later they were evicted. They were also victims of harassment, surveillance at their homes and, in some cases, they were temporarily detained.

Despite situations like this and ignoring the empty promises that the Cuban government continues to make in terms of respecting and guaranteeing the human rights of its citizens, in October 2020 Cuba was elected again as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

With the arrival of COVID-19 on the island, the Cuban regime did not fail to take advantage of the opportunity to continue restricting the rights of the population under the veil of the sanitary measures imposed to keep the pandemic under control. Thus, throughout the year there were reported cases of fines being imposed for between \$2,000- \$3,000 Cuban Pesos - CUP (\$75- \$113 USD) for the alleged breach of sanitary measures. It should be mentioned that these fines far exceed the average monthly income of the Cuban population \$880 CUP (\$33 USD) and that they are imposed especially against activists and human rights defenders. One textbook case of this took place on June 30, in which, according to independent sources, at least a hundred people were arrested and charged with the crime of "propagation of the epidemic" when they were preparing to hold a protest against police brutality.

Additionally, the pandemic made it necessary to prohibit one of the main economic engines in Cuba: tourism. The restrictions, when put alongside the already fragile state of the Cuban economy, put the income of the Cuban population and the Cuban state on hold, unleashing a serious economic crisis. The initial consequences did not take long to materialize, in March there was already a severe shortage of food and basic necessities throughout the island.



Faced with the crisis, Cubans had no choice but to risk their health by standing in the long queues that formed from the early hours of the morning stretching several blocks and that lasted for hours until the few products that had been delivered to the shops ran out. An additional difficulty presented itself when the so-called “coleros” started appearing in the queues taking turns in the lines to gain access to these products that they would then be able to resell at in-

flated prices. Furthermore, in these queues, people have also been exposed to excessive uses of force by the police, anti-riot troops and the military who are in charge of maintaining order in the lines and who do not hesitate to use force to prevent protests by those in line and the journalists who have been taking photos of what is happening as a result of the shortages on the island.

Given the continuity of the economic crisis and the pressing shortage of basic necessities, the Cuban

government chose to allow the purchase and sale of products in foreign currencies. However, not only was this incapable of solving the serious shortage problems, but also deepened the level of inequality in terms of access to basic goods between those who have access to remittances from abroad and those who do not have this possibility.

Despite the critical situation on the island, the Trump administration continued to tighten the economic sanctions that it was imposing throughout the year until the Western Union offices operating in Cuba were closed in November. This created even more obstacles for the Cuban population to gain access to funds from abroad that many depend on to survive.



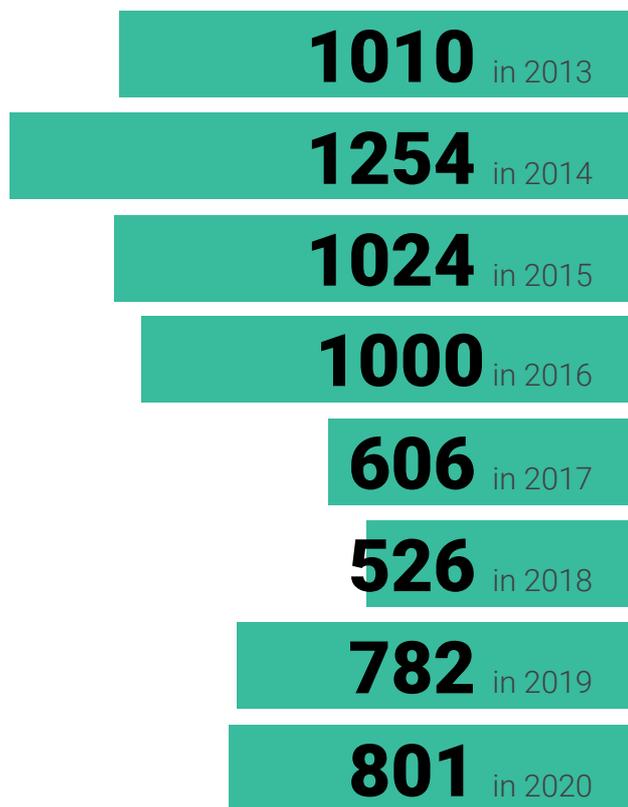
**Faced with the crisis,  
Cubans had no choice  
but to risk their health  
by standing in the long  
queues**

"SI HAY COMIDA PARA EL PUEBLO,  
NO IMPORTAN LOS RIESGOS."

·RAÚL·

# EYE on CUBA DATABASE

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



The Eye on Cuba network is in charge of collecting and adequately documenting human rights violations against civilians and people who carry out activist activities on the island.

The defenders that are part of this network provide psychological and / or material support to the victims of these cases on which they are reporting.

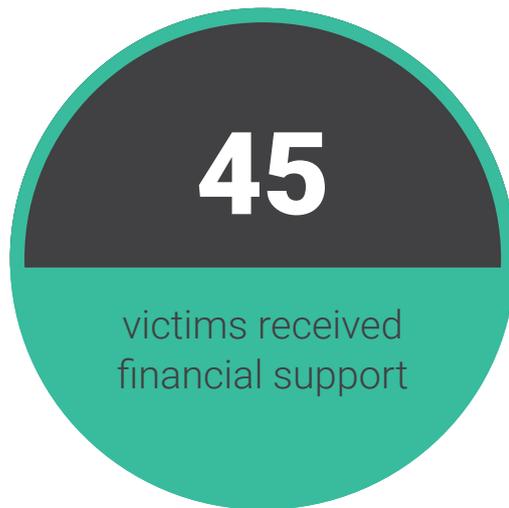
The intention of this database is not to collect information about all the violations, but rather to document a sample of well-documented and verified cases that represent a sufficiently broad representation of the human rights violations that occur on the island. This sample allows us to study the cases, their characteristics, the similarities between them and emerging trends. The network also collects information about the identities of the perpetrators in case they could be used in the event that they would be held accountable at some point in the future.

Likewise, the data that can be found on the [www.eyeoncuba.org](http://www.eyeoncuba.org) website, which publicly presents information about the cases in order to try and raise awareness about the human rights situation on the island and to reduce the use of repression.

DATABASE



# 2020 IN NUMBERS



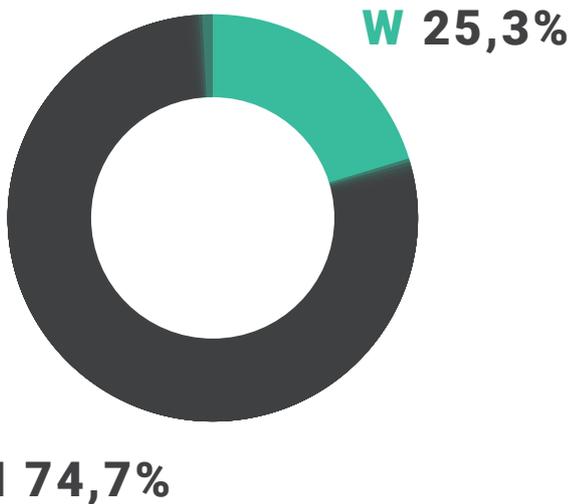
2020 IN NUMBERS





# THE IDENTITY OF THE VICTIMS

IDENTITY



**A** greater number of cases were documented in which the victims identify themselves as men. Although civil and political rights are the ones most affected for both men and women, women suffer more violations of economic, social and cultural rights in comparison with men.

Women are victims of **17,8%** more violations of personal freedom compared to men and **36,8%** more violations of the right to housing.

> **76%** of the victims who identify themselves as men identify as activists

> **93%** cases in which one or more of the civil and political rights of men were violated, with arbitrary detentions and violations of freedom of opinion and expression making up the most frequent cases

> **22,7%** cases in which one or more of the economic, social, and cultural rights of the person were violated, with the right to property and adequate living conditions making up the most frequent cases

> **66%** of the victims who identify themselves as women identify as activists.

> **88,6%** cases in which one or more of the civil and political rights of women were violated, with arbitrary detentions and violations of security and personal integrity making up the most frequent cases

> **33%** cases in which one or more of the economic, social, and cultural rights of the person were violated, with the right to housing and property making up the most frequent cases

# DIFFERENCES BY AGE

**P**eople ranging between the ages of 30 and 60 are more likely to see their rights disrespected. Violations of rights that affect people over 70 and under 20 are unusual when compared to the violations suffered by people with the ages in the range above, possibly because these are age groups that do not have a significant number of activists.

**7,8%** 20-30 years old

**27,7%** 30-40 years old

**28,9%** 40-50 years old

**27,9%** 50-60 years old

**7,1%** 60-70 years old

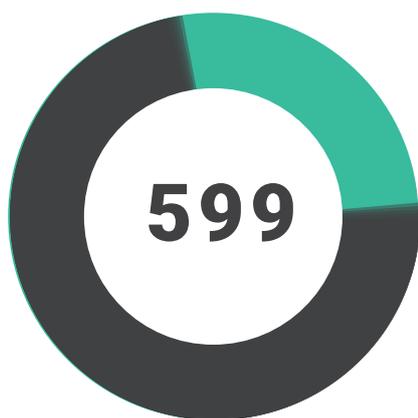
AGE





# ACTIVISTS

ACTIVISTS



**75%** of the victims are  
**ACTIVISTS**

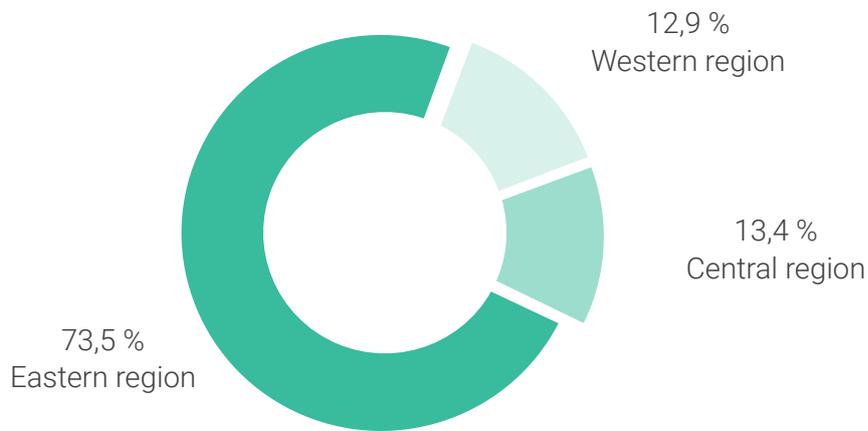
In the majority of documented cases the victims were identified as activists. In a significant proportion of these cases, human rights violations occur when people were performing some act in their capacity as activists. Human rights violations against activists tend to focus on civil and political rights, the most frequently violated being their rights to not be detained arbitrarily, to freedom of opinion and expression, and to freedom of movement and transit.

It is important to note that in the database there are also a significant number of cases of human rights violations against people who are not connected to activism or the defense of human rights in Cuba.

- > **77,6%** Activists were **men**
- > **22,3%** Activists were **women**
- > **50,0%** Cases in which the abuse took place when the **victim was acting as an activist**
- > **99,5%** Cases in which the victim was acting as an activist **one or more civil and political rights were violated**, the right not to be arbitrarily detained was the right most frequently violated

# GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION AND TIMEFRAME

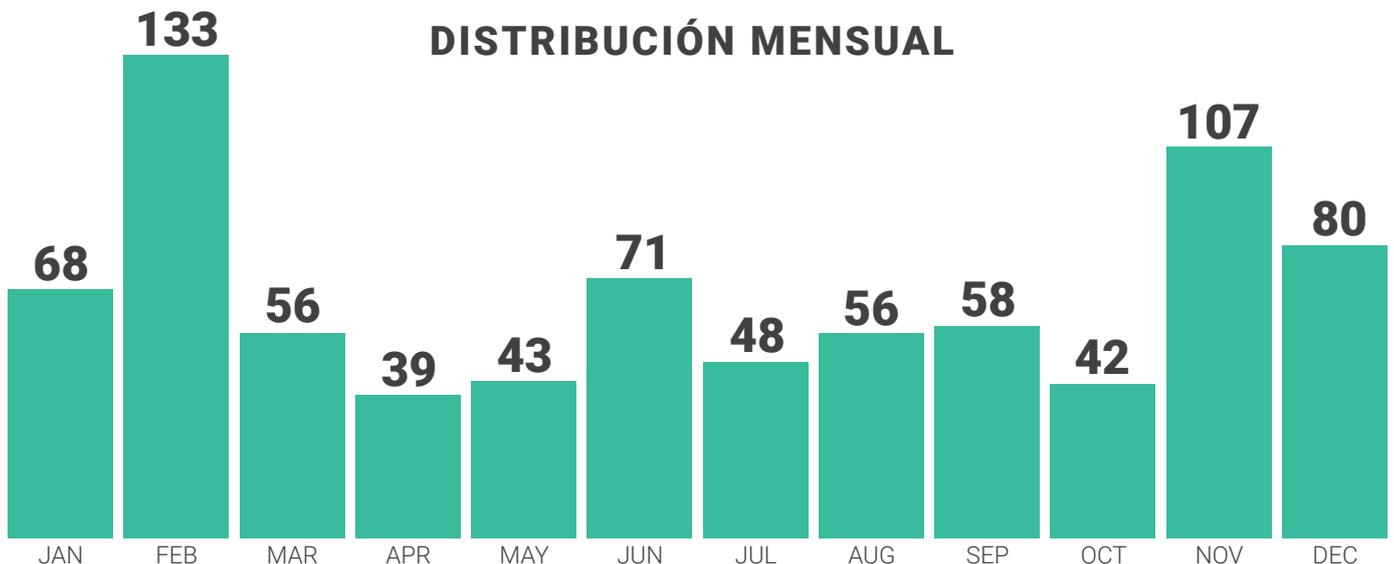
## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION



## Distribution by province

- > Guantánamo: 381
- > Villa Clara: 36
- > Pinar del Río: 16
- > Mayabeque: 4
- > Holguín: 151
- > Sancti Spíritus: 22
- > Las Tunas: 15
- > Ciego de Ávila: 3
- > La Habana: 63
- > Matanzas: 19
- > Santiago de Cuba: 13
- > Artemisa: 1
- > Granma: 44
- > Camagüey: 19
- > Cienfuegos: 13
- > Isla de la Juventud: 1

## DISTRIBUCIÓN MENSUAL



# AFFECTED RIGHTS

**A**s has been a trend in recent years, civil and political rights were the most frequently violated rights in 2020. There were mainly cases of arbitrary detentions, restriction of freedom of movement and limitation of freedom of expression that were documented. There were also more and more violations of economic, social, and cultural rights. During 2020, complaints about the violation of the rights to health, housing, work, and property topped the list.

**125**

Cases in which the right of assembly was violated, usually meaning that someone was not allowed to go to the meeting place or the participants were detained during or after the event, in 85.6% of these cases the victim was an activist.

**178**

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

**302**

Cases in which the victims were arbitrarily detained. These are usually cases of short-term detentions. The victims are sometimes abandoned miles from their homes with no means for returning.

**27**

Cases in which someone was not allowed to leave the country. In accordance with Decree-Law 302, the authorities reserve the right to prevent someone from leaving for "reasons of National Security" or "in the public interest". There were a smaller number of these cases than in recent years, probably due to international travel restrictions. 88.8% of the victims of affected by this type of ban were activists.

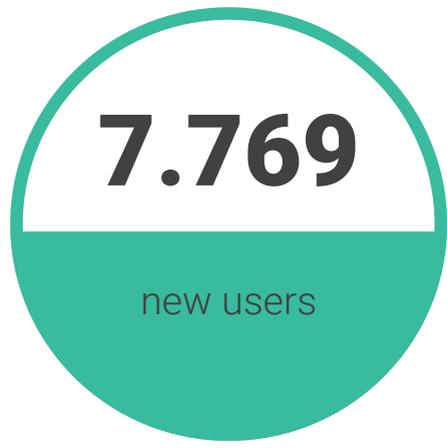
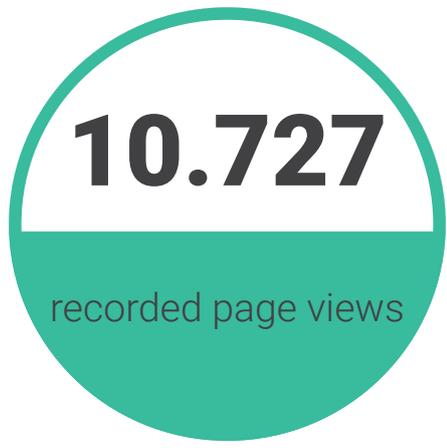
**208**

Cases in which the right to freedom of expression and opinion was directly limited.

RIGHTS



# OUTREACH AND SOCIAL MEDIA



[www.eyeoncuba.org](http://www.eyeoncuba.org)



**@EYEonCUBA**

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

**@EYECUBA**

Our Facebook page **has continued to expand** and has been used to conduct campaigns that promote the work of this database

OUTREACH AND MEDIA

## COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST NUMBER OF VISITS



**HONG KONG**

**UNITED STATES**

**CHINA**

## ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Human Rights Watch – World Report 2021: Cuba

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/cuba>

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; Country Report: Cuba – Situation of

Human Rights in Cuba <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Cuba2020-en.pdf>

The Impact of COVID-19 on Cuba in 2020

<https://cubalog.eu/en/2021/01/4299/>

Press Release from the UN regarding the Embargo on Cuba

[www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25848&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25848&LangID=E)

Freedom of religion or belief in Cuba – CSW

<https://www.csw.org.uk/2021/01/12/report/4940/article.htm>

Prisoners Defenders – Political Prisoners in Cuba

<https://www.prisonersdefenders.org/presos-politicos-en-cuba/> (Spanish Only)

Amnesty International – Cuba <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/cuba/>

CADAL – Cuba <https://www.cadal.org/Cuba/>

Civil Rights Defenders – Cuba <https://crd.org/cuba/>

The new international landscape and the renewed efforts and initiatives of Cuban civil society are creating an unprecedented opportunity to carry out a profound change on the island, ensuring progress, prosperity, and respect for all human rights.

We urge the Cuban government to begin taking the necessary steps to reform the country in various areas. Opening the doors up to independent civil society to achieve a more pluralistic and inclusive society in which no one is discriminated against or punished for their ideas. Allow greater private initiative, so that the private economy of Cubans and the country in general could benefit. Carry out a reform of the branches of public authorities that guarantees a balance of powers, independence, and true representation of the Cuban people. Likewise, we urge the executive to safeguard the general interest of the people and not to put their ideals before the freedom and well-being of the people. We recognize that human rights are indivisible and interdependent, so ignoring a right or a group of rights puts the guarantee of other rights at risk, seeking the maximum guarantee of all civil, political, economic, social, cultural freedoms and rights and environmental issues will result in the general well-being of the population and in the stability and prosperity of the country.

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### IN APPRECIATION

On behalf of People in Need, we thank all of the collaborators of the Eye on Cuba network, as well as all the people who help or have helped them in one way or another, and for their dedication, support, courage, and determination. The grain of sand contributed by each of these individuals and organizations helps to keep this initiative alive, so that the scope and impact of the work can continue improving year after year. More importantly, we reiterate our unconditional support to all Cuban men and women who have seen their rights violated.

**FROM HERE WE REMIND EVERYONE THAT HUMAN RIGHTS TRANSCEND IDEOLOGY AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION, AND THEREFORE, IDEOLOGICAL OR ECONOMIC CONFRONTATIONS SHOULD NOT BE USED AS AN EXCUSE FOR THEIR VIOLATION.**



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Monitoring Human Rights Abuses in Cuba



[www.clovekvtisni.cz/en/](http://www.clovekvtisni.cz/en/)

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