

H.E. Mrs. Maité Rivero Torres
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba
Postboks 4081 AMB,
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Your Excellency,

I am reaching out to bring to your attention the lack of urgent medical care for Loreto Hernández García who is currently serving a seven-year long sentence in Guamajal Prison. Mr. Hernández García's health has seriously deteriorated while imprisoned. He suffers from asthma, high blood pressure, and hypertension, and has not been provided with appropriate food for his diabetes. In May 2022, he was admitted to a local hospital, only to be expelled a week after due to a State Security order. In addition to medical conditions compromising his health, it was reported in May 2023 that prison authorities committed acts of violence against García and placed him in a punishment cell for nearly eight hours.

While Mr. Hernández García's health problems have worsened, medical specialists report that he is experiencing symptoms indicating that he suffers from pancreatic cancer. Hence, he urgently needs to see a medical specialist for an adequate examination. Even so, the prison recently rejected his request to receive medical treatment outside of the prison. According to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, all prisons "shall ensure prompt access to medical attention in urgent cases", and "clinical decisions may only be taken by the responsible health-care professionals and may not be overruled or ignored by non-medical prison staff" (rule 27). Mr. Hernández García is a leader of the Association of Free Yorubas, a Santería religious group. As several other religious communities, they have not been allowed registration by the Cuban authorities. By disallowing their registration, the State ends up suppressing the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion of certain groups, which in turn leads to lack of respect for the religious leaders among public officers. The imprisonment, medical neglect and ill-treatment of Mr. Hernández García cannot be seen in isolation from the government's systematic discriminatory practices towards the Association of Free Yorubas and other unregistered religious communities.

In light of these concerns, I kindly request your intervention in ensuring that:

- The health concerns of Loreto Hernández García are appropriately addressed in accordance with international human rights conventions and the Nelson Mandela Rules;
- Loreto Hernández García and other prisoners who have been targeted because of their involvement in an unregistered religious group and/or their peaceful participation in the 11 July protest are released immediately;
- Leaders and members of unregistered religious groups are protected from harassment and treated with the same respect as other Cuban citizens.

Sincerely,