

The Art-tivist Movement in Cuba: One Year and No Dialogue

PRESS STATEMENT

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It has been one year since nearly 300 artists and activists gathered and demonstrated for freedom of expression at the gates of the Ministry of Culture in Havana. Inspired by the peaceful and unprecedented protests of the San Isidro Movement, the artists called for artistic and personal freedoms in Cuba, and for the Cuban government to take part in a dialogue that would allow the Cuban people to have a voice in determining their own future. The United States stood by the Cuban people in that historic moment and continues to do so today.

While officials initially agreed to listen to what the artists had to say, the regime later refused to take part in any dialogue. The Cuban government's actions since that day reaffirmed their determination to silence the artists, activists, and independent journalists who continue to bravely advocate for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba. The regime passed laws restricting free speech online, using them to fine and suspend the telecommunications services of activists and journalists who publish critical facts and opinions.

They imposed harsh penalties on protestors, seeking sentences of up to 30 years in prison for those who participated in July demonstrations. They repeatedly detained artists and activists, including Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara, Maykel Osorbo, and Jose Daniel Ferrer, all of whom remain in prison simply for giving voice to the Cuban people's desire for freedom. Last week, nearly a year after the historic gathering in front of the Ministry of Culture, the regime sent security forces and a government-sponsored mob

to bully playwright Yunion Garcia, who took part in last year's negotiations and organized calls for another peaceful protest.

Repeatedly since last year's historic gathering in front of the Ministry of Culture, Cubans have asked their government to hear their calls for fundamental freedoms, democracy, and respect for human rights. On every occasion, the regime squandered the opportunity for dialogue, doubling down on a bankrupt ideology and failed economic system that cannot provide for Cubans' basic needs. We commend the Cuban people for continuing to call on their government to listen to their aspirations and to demand respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. We urge the Cuban regime to heed their call, and to allow the Cuban people to shape their own future, free from the threat of government reprisal.

Fuente: <https://www.state.gov/the-art-tivist-movement-in-cuba-one-year-and-no-dialogue/>