The Cuban Government's Persecution of a Left-wing Dissident

written by Samuel Farber | November 21, 2023

Alina Bárbara López Hernández

In the closing address to the tenth congress of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR -the street level vigilance committees) that took place on September 28 of this year, the president of the Cuban Republic, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, affirmed that the problems confronted by the country have been 'analyzed, we are confronting them, making decisions without fear. With courage and also with why not say it, Cuban "guapería" (street level swagger and toughness) because nobody will surrender here.'

But what is "guapería"? The "guapo," in this Cuban sense of the word, is the big macho-man standing at the neighborhood's street corner, overbearing, boastful, abuser and in extreme cases, he can also be a killer. In other words, the "guapo" trusts the reason of force against the force of reason. Nevertheless, he specializes in intimidating people, what means to say that he is willing to do everything that he considers necessary to achieve his objectives against others, except when he encounters opposition that will prevent him from doing so.

We can see this clearly in the intimidating actions of the State Security organs of the Cuban state in the city of Matanzas (a provincial capital 100 kilometers east of Havana) have been carrying out against the historian Alina Bárbara López Hernández. She is a notable figure among Cuban political intellectuals, as a persistent and tenacious critic of the Cuban regime from a left-wing democratic perspective. I have been very impressed by the articles she has written in the last several years: lucid, courageous, and extremely well-reasoned and documented.

The facts speak for themselves. In April of 2023, Alina (many of us call her by her first name) protested the detention of Jorge Fernández Era, humorist, and frequent collaborator at that time of *La Joven Cuba*, an electronic journal coordinated by Alina until February of this year. With a lot of political intelligence, Alina protested by showing a piece of paper in a Matanzas park with one word on it: Libertad. This provoked a kind of "Operation Guapería" by State Security agents with arbitrary interrogations and arrests which at the same time were becoming part of a case that the local prosecutor was preparing against her. Meanwhile, although she had not been tried and found guilty of any offense, Alina was included in the infamous list of the "regulados" (regulated people) who are not allowed to leave the country. In her case, Alina had not other recourse but to cancel her previously announced participation in an academic event in the United States.

It is important to emphasize that Alina has very courageously resisted attending the constant interviews that she, and many other Cubans, are summoned to by State Security without there being

any previous criminal or administrative accusation of any kind against those citizens. Obviously, these interviews are nothing less than instruments of intimidation by the “guapos” of State Security. The state prosecutors then formally accused Alina of “disobedience, ” and besides already having been placed in the list of “regulados” she was placed under a type of “house arrest” with very limited mobility (for example, she cannot go out of her house in the evening nor can she travel to other places and cities in the country). The prosecution then offered her a deal of paying a fine that Alina refused because she considers herself an innocent victim of abuse. For that reason, she will be subject to a summary oral trial, initially programmed for November 16 but now postponed to November 28. As a result of such a summary process, she could be condemned to up to one year of imprisonment.

What is to be done? In the first place, to publish and protest this scandalous situation to build maximum pressure over the “guapos” of State Security and their allies in the not at all independent judicial wing of the government. This, while bearing in mind, as I suggested earlier, that these organs of repression do respond to pressures when these are sufficiently strong. It is especially important that the independent human rights organizations such as Amnesty, PEN, and Human Rights Watch take note and protest Alina’s persecution. Any contact or access that readers of this article may have to unions, social movements, places of worship, and other institutions of civil society, must be utilized to incorporate them in the campaign to obtain the unconditional freedom of Alina Bárbara López Hernández.

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