

Where Should Socialists Stand on Cuba Today?

July 12, 2021



Yesterday, July 11, 2021, Cubans in several cities took to the streets to protest lack of health care, lack of food, and to demand freedom. Where should socialists stand on these protests and the Cuban government?

First, international socialists like myself, in a variety of organizations or independently, have always supported the right of the Cuban people to self-determination. We believe that the United States should, to use an old slogan, keep its hands off of Cuba.

We have opposed the U.S. embargo and its extension through the Helms-Burton Act because, even though food and medicine have not generally been included in the embargo, we recognize that the reduction in trade adversely affects the Cuban people.

Second, we stand opposed to any U.S. military intervention in Cuba or to any U.S.-subsidized operation by other states or actors.

Third, we have supported the right of Americans and Cubans to freely travel to each other's countries and oppose restrictions on travel to Cuba.

Altogether, this constitutes an anti-imperialist position.

At the same time, as international socialists, we support the right of the Cuban people to engage in free speech, to assemble together to protest, and to demonstrate on any issue that they choose. Certainly, when the health system fails and when food is not available, we support their right to make demands on their government to rectify those situations, just as we could in any other country.

We also support the Cubans' right to demand changes in their government. Cubans, we have always believed, should have the right if they wish to challenge the ruling Communist Party that has held power now for more than sixty years and to organize new political parties. We also support their right to organize independent labor unions of their own choice, unions not controlled by the Communist Party and the government.

We therefore oppose today the Cuban government's repression of the demonstrations. We call for the release of those who have been taken prisoner. We also condemn Cuban President Díaz-Canel statement: "the order to battle is given: revolutionaries, take to the streets.," which is a call for either vigilante violence or organized political attacks on protestors.

International socialists should support the Cuban people's right to protest and oppose the Cuban government's repression. We should attempt to identify within any new movement the genuinely democratic and socialist currents that wish to bring about a democratic socialist society, a democratic government overseeing a collectively owned and managed economy.

If we do identify democratic socialists in Cuba, we should support them and collaborate with them. But in any case, even if we can identify no democratic socialists within the movement at this point, we support the people's right to make their voices heard.