

WHO ARE WE?

We are Cubans. We belong to a group of people who arrived in Spain after the political agreements signed in 2010 between the Spanish Socialist Government and the Cuban Socialist Government. We were removed from Cuban soil as ex-political prisoners and open dissidents of the Cuban Government. None of us participated in the negotiations between the two governments or was involved in signing the aforementioned agreements.

WHY ARE WE HERE IN MADRID, OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUILDING, AT THE SQUARE OF PROVINCE NUMBER 1?

WE ARE PACIFICALLY LIVING IN THIS VENUE. WE HAVE BEEN ABANDONED AND ARE HELPLESS ON THE STREETS. A NUMBER OF US WERE ON A HUNGER STRIKE SINCE APRIL 13, 2012, FOR 48 DAYS, UNTIL IT WAS TEMPORARILY HALTED.

All of us, as well as our families, arrived in Spain after the referred agreements reached by the Cuban and the Spanish Governments with the intervention of the Cuban Catholic Church. By means of those agreements the exit of all of us from Cuba was arranged. Our status is that of political refugees and we were given political asylum under the jurisdiction of international policies. For most of us, our departure from Cuba was in fact an exile forced upon us. But we accepted it under the conditions and guarantees offered by the Laws of Political Asylum and the regulations offered by the International Community that protect persons like us for political reasons. We accepted our harsh forthcoming circumstances, trusting that all the conditions of the agreements would be honored. Some of us were forced to leave Cuba under ruthless threats and coercions. None of us knew the exact details of the agreements between the two governments and even less the harsh economic situation Spain was going through. We ignore why the Spanish Government acted as it did.

The fact that Spain was the country chosen by Cuba to send our group here is the sole responsibility of the Socialista Obrero Español Party. That party was the forerunner, during its term in power, to speed up the referred agreements before its Presidency ended in the European Union to achieve a change in the so called Unique Position of the European Union toward Cuba. We believe that the administration of the Socialista Obrero Español Party acted hastily without making plans or serious provisions to receive, protect, and shelter us as a group. The Government program also failed in taking into account the brutal social and penitentiary reality of the country where we come from.

In any case, the Popular Party is now in power, and if it is true that it had nothing to do, directly, with our arrival in Spain, it is this new government who must assume the responsibility to adopt pertinent decisions to resolve our dramatic situation. We know perfectly well that our conflict was "inherited" by this administration from the previous one, but we are the victims of this chaos and it is not our fault that we were offered a number of guarantees before putting us on a plane, without a return ticket, and that we were coerced to make the difficult decision of going into exile.

Under the administration of the Popular Party, all assistance to us has been withdrawn and we have been left on our own without any other shelter than the Spanish streets.

WHAT DO WE WANT?

We want that all the conditions of the original agreements are met and that the offers made to us are honored. We want that all national and international policies that regulate situations like ours are abided to and that the objectives contained in each one of those laws are fulfilled. Although we do not wish the government to support us, it is important that the assistance we are due be extended; however, this aid would be useless if, at the same time, intensive programs designed by the government are not put into place to guarantee our insertion in the Spanish society, assist us in obtaining jobs, and help those who have professional careers to homologate (or easily validate) their degrees and diplomas issued in Cuba. We do not want money, but the means that would enable us

to work. Without a coherent program with specific measures designed by the government and all the institutions involved in the process to achieve our goals, there will be no solution to our predicament.

We accepted to leave Cuba because, apparently, our arrival, insertion in this society, and additional assistance, including jobs for us, had been planned for and prearranged. This was not the reality we had to face. After our arrival in Spain, many of us lost our time looking for jobs because we could not provide potential employers a Resident Card and the necessary documentation; items that became available only many months after our arrival. The validation of our diplomas from Cuba has not been facilitated. We are the victims of the failure of all original agreements. Our case is a clear evidence that all the objectives and norms of the Refugee's Laws are not enforced and that the ONG (nongovernmental organizations) ignored the particular circumstances of our group. Disregarded as well has been the fact that our arrival in Spain has not been part of a standard process of immigration and does not follow ordinary immigration rules, since a large number of us, those who have spent years in prison, have not received the least penitentiary training to reinsert ourselves into a normal society, a matter that is made even more difficult when that society happens to be in a foreign country: Spain, not Cuba.

None of this is the fault of the Spanish people and we do not wish to do any harm to this great country. We thank the Spanish people for the way they have treated us and continue to do so. The Spanish people and the general population of this country should be aware that the economic means to assist us and fund the programs to welcome refugees seeking political asylum do not originate in the Spanish Government nor come directly from the Spaniards, but from the Organization of United Nations' Fund for Assistance to Refugees.

We wish to regain possession of what was promised to us in the agreements signed, and that if we are a problem to the Spanish Government because it is not prepared or able to offer us asylum with all the guarantees required to reinsert us in the Spanish society, after the traumas we have suffered in our country of origin, that the Spanish Government takes the necessary steps to place our case in the hands of the Organization of United Nations to resolve it, relocating us, if necessary, in other member nations of this Organization.

We are not alone in this critical situation, since our families came along too, including small children, women, and elderly relatives, some of whom suffer serious illnesses.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US?

1. With whatever help you deem appropriate, if you can identify yourself with our case.
2. With food and medications.
3. With your presence, company, and moral support.
4. Spreading the information concerning our situation and contacting those who can make a difference.