

# Encouraging Freedom, Justice, And Prosperity In Cuba

*President Bush Announces A Series Of Measures To Support Growing Democratic Movements In Cuba*

Today, President Bush announced measures to help prepare Cuba for transition to a democratic future, including a new initiative to develop an international multi-billion dollar Freedom Fund. Before his speech, the President met with family members of political prisoners in Cuba. The President believes that now is the time to stand with the Cuban people as they stand up for their liberty. The world should put aside its differences and prepare for Cuba's transition to a future of progress and promise.

- **The President has asked Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez to lead the effort to form the Freedom Fund by enlisting foreign governments and international organizations to contribute.** This Fund would help the Cuban people rebuild their economy and make the transition to democracy. It would give Cubans access to grants, loans, and debt relief to rebuild their country as soon as Cuba's government demonstrates that it has adopted, in word and deed, fundamental freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press, freedom to form political parties, and the freedom to change their government through periodic, multi-party elections.
- **The President also announced measures that the United States government is prepared to take right now to help the Cuban people directly – but only if Cuba's ruling class gets out of the way.**
  - If Cuban rulers will end their restrictions on Internet access for all of the Cuban people, the U.S. is prepared to license nongovernmental organizations and faith-based groups to provide computers and Internet access to Cuban students.
  - If Cuban rulers allow them to freely participate, the U.S. is prepared to invite Cuban young people whose families suffer oppression into the Partnership for Latin American Youth Scholarship Program, designed to help them have equal access to greater educational opportunities.
- **The President highlighted family members of political prisoners in Cuba who have been jailed for nothing more than their beliefs.**
  - Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso was arrested for writing ideas that the Cuban authorities did not like, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.
  - Jose Luis Garcia Paneque was sentenced to 24 years in prison for daring to speak the truth about Cuba's regime.
  - Omar Pernet Hernandez is serving 25 years in prison for being an advocate of freedom and human rights.
  - Jorge Luis Gonzalez Tanquero was arrested and is serving time inside a Cuban prison, charged with crimes against the state after defending the human rights of his countrymen.
  - The President also mentioned imprisoned dissidents Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, Normando Hernandez Gonzales, and Omar Rodriguez Saludes.

**The President reiterates U.S. Government policy that the embargo on the Cuban regime must stand as long as the regime maintains its monopoly over the political and economic life of the Cuban people.** Trade with Cuba under the current regime would merely enrich the elites in power and strengthen their grip. Congress should show their support and solidarity for fundamental change in Cuba by maintaining our embargo on the dictatorship until that change comes.

## The Free World Can Do Much More To Show Its Solidarity With The Cuban People

**The United States stands with the Cuban people in their suffering.** We have granted asylum to hundreds of thousands who have fled the repression and misery imposed by the regime, rallied nations to take up the banner of Cuban liberty, and authorized private citizens and organizations to provide food, medicine, and other aid. This aid totaled over \$270 million last year alone.

**The President thanked members of Congress for their bipartisan support in a vote for additional funding for Cuban democracy efforts and asked them to complete work on the measure, so that he can sign it into law soon.**

**President Bush also calls on other nations to make tangible efforts to show public support for dissidents in Cuba.** The Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland have shown their leadership and courage by becoming vital sources of support and encouragement to Cuba's brave democratic opposition. The President encourages other nations to follow their lead by:

- Opening their embassies in Havana to pro-democracy leaders and inviting them to events;
- Using the lobbies of their embassies to give Cubans access to the Internet, books, and magazines; and
- Encouraging their country's nongovernmental organizations to reach out directly to Cuba's independent civil society.

#### **The United States Is Committed To Helping Cuba Join The Democracies of the World**

**The policy of the United States is clear: to break the absolute control the regime holds over the material resources that Cubans need to live and prosper.** The Cuban people are denied the most basic freedoms and opportunities – freedoms that are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which governments in our hemisphere have agreed to honor and defend in the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

**Throughout the Western Hemisphere, the United States has established itself as a reliable partner that has worked to strengthen the sovereignty of our neighbors by supporting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law and by promoting open markets.**