



Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme

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International Federation
for Human Rights

Federación Internacional
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الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الإنسان

PRESS RELEASE

Cuba/United Nations

Universal Periodic Review of Cuba – A missed opportunity ?

Paris, Geneva, February 6th 2009 - With the support of a large majority of member States of the UN Human Rights Council, Cuba was submitted to a concert of praises, rather than an objective evaluation of its human rights record, on the occasion of its review by the UN human rights Council, on February 6th 2009. The Cuban government as of yesterday failed to commit to any substantive progress on the occasion of the review.

A large number of countries, reviving the 1970s “non-aligned movement”, occupied the three hour debate with praises of the alleged achievements of Cuba, and failed to reflect objectively the human rights challenges. In particular, a huge majority refused to question Cuba about major violations, such as the detention of political prisoners, the restrictions of freedom of expression and of movement, the blockade of human rights defenders and the total lack of independence of justice. Praises of the alleged Cuban record in the field of economic social and cultural rights failed to include the challenges in these sectors.

Questioned nevertheless by members of the Western group and some Latin American countries on violations of civil and political rights, the Cuban officials refused to commit to achieving progress, in contradiction with the spirit of the review.

In earlier statements, the government of Cuba had confirmed its ratification of the ICCPR and the ICESCR, as well as indicated its positive response to an invitation of the UN Special rapporteur on Torture. Yet, as recognised Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President, *“these declarations were made previously to the UPR review. They fall short from the obligations Cuba as a long-standing member of the UN human rights council to cooperate with ALL special procedures. We also awaited commitments to guarantee the freedom of association and of movement of independent human rights defenders, to abolish death penalty and to put an end to the arbitrary detention of all political prisoners”*

Yet, as the process concludes in June with the adoption of the UPR report, *“Cuban has a few months to revisit its position and respond to the concerns of the overarching human rights community”*, indicated Mrs Belhassen.

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