

ACTION CIRCULAR: SOLIDARITY WITH CUBAN ARTISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

LAUNCH OF “THE ETERNAL FLAME” PROJECT



Members of the San Isidro Movement in Havana. Photo credits: San Isidro Movement

What's happening?

Since late November 2020, members of Cuba's San Isidro Movement – composed of artists, academics, and alternative thinkers - have been detained, had their human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of movement restricted, and been criminalized simply for peacefully exercising their human rights. Amnesty International also verified that members of the Movement and allies were under frightening levels of surveillance. You can learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

In late January 2021, according to media reports, members of the group, including artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara have been detained or harassed by authorities. Minister of Culture Alpidio Alonso Grau [reportedly assaulted people](#) who gathered in front of the Ministry's offices to read poetry, protesting attacks on freedom of expression and artists in recent months.

During March and April of 2021, over 30 activists were reportedly under similar surveillance

levels. Additionally, authorities reportedly took and destroyed some of Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara's artwork. As of April 28, 2021, Luis Manuel Otero has been on hunger strike for over 48 hours, in protest of these restrictions on freedom of expression.

The Eternal Flame – a conceptual digital memorial in solidarity with the San Isidro Movement

In response to recent waves of detentions and harassment of members of Cuba's San Isidro Movement – composed of artists, academics, and alternative thinkers – Amnesty International calls on artists and human rights defenders and activists across the world to join the campaign “The Eternal Flame”, in solidarity with the Movement.

The campaign includes the [launch of a contemporary piece of art \(video\)](#) depicting Cuban artists burning their tools, in protest against the situation artists face in Cuba. Erik Ravelo, author of this conceptual video, is a renowned Cuban artist known as the creative mind behind Benetton's campaign "Unhate", which featured the controversial images of world leaders kissing and for which he was awarded the Grand Prix at Cannes in 2012.

For The Eternal Flame, he was inspired by fellow Cuban artists and their bravery to resist against illegitimate restrictions imposed by the Cuban government on their freedom of expression. Erik explained: “This project represents the flame of freedom: a flame that never goes out, a contemporary action that never ends and that is kept alive by our solidarity with artists defending freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and as artists, nobody should tell us what is okay to do or say through our art. This is why I, along with other artists in the video, burn our tools, to build a parallelism with what the Cuban government is doing against Cuban artists. It's time to stop this repression and respect creative freedom.”

Take action! Calls, targets and resources

We are inviting all Sections, activists and supporters to show their solidarity with the San Isidro Movement and to urge Cuban authorities to stop harassing, intimidating, and detaining artists and, instead, to engage in genuine dialogue with them.

People can join The Eternal Flame campaign and “keep the flame alive” by:

1. [Sharing the video on social media](#), prepared by renowned Cuban artist Erik Ravelo with the collaboration of other Cuban artists.
2. Publishing their own photos or videos keeping the flame alive, with due precautions if opting to incorporate fire in their performances. We do not encourage people to put themselves or their belongings in danger by opting for this option, therefore, some suggestions to consider are:
 - a. If using a candle, matches or lighters, please be mindful of your surroundings.
 - b. Using a small candle, similar to Amnesty's logo or any type you might have at home already.
 - c. Coloring! Since this is an action directly tied to artists, interpretations of The Eternal Flame using art are extremely welcomed. Painting, drawing,

coloring, illustrating are all options to consider.

When sharing and posting on social media, make sure to use the hashtags #TheEternalFlame #LaLlamaEterna.

Targets of this action are:

	Cuban authorities (targets)	Artists (in solidarity)
Twitter	Miguel Díaz-Canel, president of Cuba @DiazCanelB Fernando Rojas, vice minister of Culture of Cuba and key influencer in decisions made around artists in Cuba: @fernandorojas_6	@Mov_sanisidro @LMOAlcantara #ErikRavelo (no Twitter handle)
Facebook	Miguel Díaz-Canel, president of Cuba (tag institutional page: @PresidenciaDeCuba)	@Mv.Sanisidro

Here is a **sample post** that you can adapt to express your solidarity on all social media channels:

.@DiazCanelB instead of harassing artists, Cuban authorities must engage in genuine dialogue towards guaranteeing freedom of expression in the country.

I join #TheEternalFlame in solidarity with the @Mov_sanisidro @LMOAlcantara and all brave human rights defenders in #Cuba

[You can find the video in Spanish here. The English version and other social media assets will be developed and uploaded here, in the upcoming days.](#)

Additional information

More details on potential actions and collaborations will be available soon. If your team is interested in collaborating by connecting this initiative with other artists sympathetic to human rights causes or by organizing local digital events (screening sessions, panels with Cuban artists and others), please contact us at elina.castillo@amnesty.org

Contact

For questions, please email elina.castillo@amnesty.org