

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

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CUBA: THE STATE REPRESSES WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The Cuban government must put an end to institutional gender-based violence against women human rights defenders, journalists, and activists, Amnesty International said today as it launched its new report *“They Want Us Silent, But We Keep Resisting: Authoritarian Practices and State Violence Against Women in Cuba.”*

Amnesty International is calling on the Cuban authorities to end authoritarian practices and state gender-based violence against women human rights defenders. The report reveals that the Cuban state has implemented a systematic pattern of repression targeting women engaged in activism, journalism, and human rights defence. Such practices include arbitrary detention, unlawful surveillance, unjust criminalisation, enforced disappearance, and other forms of institutional violence — all within an environment marked by impunity for human rights violations and a lack of judicial safeguards.

“Women defenders in Cuba are punished not only for speaking out, but also for being mothers, journalists, and community leaders,” said Ana Piquer, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for the Americas. “The state wields gender-based violence as a tool of repression — seeking to break their dignity, their families, and their collective strength,” she added.

State Violence Rooted in Gender

Covering incidents between 2014 and 2025, the report finds that beyond authoritarian control, women are subjected to specific forms of repression by state agents that constitute gender-based state violence. These include forced nudity and invasive body searches, gendered, age-based and homophobic stigmatisation, and the use of motherhood, caregiving roles, and threats against relatives as mechanisms of intimidation and control.

One defender told Amnesty International:

“The treatment I’ve received has been harsher because I’m a woman and a mother. They threaten me through my children, shout at me in public, and try to weaponise guilt. It’s a deliberate cruelty towards women who dare to speak up.”

Another recounted how a state agent assaulted her during detention and subjected her to sexualised comments:

“The disgust I felt is indescribable.”

The report features testimonies from women such as **Yenisey Taboada**, mother of a political prisoner; **Luz Escobar**, an independent journalist; and **María Matienzo**, a human rights defender — all illustrating how physical, digital, and psychological harassment has become a tool to silence Cuban women.

This pattern of violence is neither isolated nor accidental; it is structural and sustained. Black women, single mothers, and women of diverse sexual orientations face heightened risks, demanding an urgent intersectional response. These abuses occur in a context of deep restrictions on human rights work, where the subordination of the judiciary to political power, the lack of reporting and redress mechanisms, and the absence of a comprehensive law against gender-based violence perpetuate impunity.

A Call for International Action

Amnesty International warns that this repression does not occur in a vacuum. The absence of strong international condemnation has allowed the Cuban state to continue its policy of control and repression with impunity.

“The international community can no longer remain silent in the face of the gendered repression suffered by women in Cuba,” Piquer stressed. “It is time for states — particularly those that have long championed human rights in Cuba, such as the inter-American bodies and the European Union and its member states — — to demand concrete protection measures. The state’s repression of women activists and defenders in Cuba constitutes a form of institutional gender-based violence that must be exposed and publicly condemned.”

Amnesty International is demanding an immediate end to institutional gender-based violence against women defenders, journalists, and activists in Cuba — violations that manifest through harassment, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance, among others. The organisation is also urging the adoption of a comprehensive law on gender-based violence, including specific protections for women human rights defenders, and calling for a sustained international commitment to monitor the situation of women defenders in the country.

Launch of a Global Petition

In response to these findings, Amnesty International is today launching a global petition inviting people worldwide to urge President **Miguel Díaz-Canel** and the Cuban authorities to end the harassment and urgently adopt a comprehensive law on gender-based violence.

Each signature collected will amplify the voices of women defenders — strengthening international pressure and demonstrating that they are not alone.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact press@amnesty.org