

Press release

## Cuba: The Right to Have a Say

Warsaw appeal to the EU and the governments of EU member states  
on Human Rights Day, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006

**The era of Castro in Cuba is coming to an end.**

On the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we, the representatives of European civil initiatives and non-governmental organizations who support Cuban democrats and independent civil society on the island, have gathered in Warsaw, Poland, to call upon the governments of the European Union member states and the European Union institutions to promote political reform and transition to democracy in Cuba.

**The decision about Cuba's future belongs solely to the Cuban people and should be decided by them under free and transparent procedures and not be confined to the corridors of power both in and outside the country.** Cubans can no longer be the only Latin American people who are denied their sovereign and legitimate right to decide on their own leaders and political system.

In Europe, countries like Portugal, Spain, East Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia have only quite recently emerged as democratic states after decades of authoritarian rule. The transition to democracy has been peaceful and prosperous for all these countries. This is a source of inspiration and hope for the Cuban people. At the same time, it implies a moral obligation for us, as Europeans, to actively support them in this transition process.

The EU should reach out, from the beginning, to the broad civic movement that, in recent years, has developed on the island. These people, many of whom have worked at the risk of their own lives, have proved themselves to be capable to design and carry out the necessary reforms for future democracy and a just system of government.

We, the undersigned, want to stress to the European leaders the importance of addressing the civic movement as the main actor of change, although not excluding the possible participation of current public officials who demonstrate a serious commitment to a free society.

**Cuban citizens are entitled to have their basic civil rights respected and to have a say in their own future.** The continuation of one-party rule with the vague promise of gradual "economic reforms" by the Cuban regime is not acceptable. We urge the European Union not to make itself co-responsible for such a development.

***List of Signatories of Warsaw appeal to EU institutions and the governments of EU member states:***

Igor Blazevic, People in Need, Czech Republic  
Agnieszka Gratkiewicz, Lech Walesa Institute, Poland  
Tomasz Pisula, Freedom and Democracy Foundation, Poland  
Martin Pasiak, Pontis Foundation, Slovakia  
Ivana Kullova, People in Peril Association, Slovakia  
Anna-Lee Stangl, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Belgium  
Liduíne Zumpolle, Cuba Futuro, The Netherlands  
Maria Luisa Bascur, Cuba Futuro, The Netherlands  
Carmen Osorio, Asociacion Espanola Cuba en Transicion, Spain  
Natalia Bellusova, Asociacion Ibero-americana por la Libertad, Spain  
Aida Durut, International Society for Human Rights, Germany  
Annette Förster, International Society for Human Rights, Germany  
Antonio Stango, Italian Helsinki Committee and Hands off Cane, Italy