

## Elections in Cuba

On January 20, 2008, general elections for the National Assembly in Cuba took place.

Around 8.4 million citizens participated in the elections, out of approximately 8.6 million of the registered voters. That means the voter turnout to be more than 97%.

Citizens elected its 614 deputies for next 5 years in direct elections, which however leave some questions as to the legitimacy. For example, voters were encouraged to use so called *voto unido* (unified vote), agreeing with all the proposed candidates.

Main dissidents declared the elections to be "theater rather than elections" and declared that "we can't speak about elections, because we don't elect anything."<sup>1</sup>

Last Cuban elections took place in January 2003, also with a very high voter turnout (around 98%).

According to Miriam Lleiva, "Cubans vote because if they choose not to, it could have consequences for their work, study, and their life in general. However, there are many people who vote because they support Cuban government."<sup>2</sup>

The candidate list is closed, with a rather complex screening process for all the potential candidates with criteria such as patriotism, revolutionary past, and communist past.

The new Cuban parliament will meet for its first session in February 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> "Disidentes califican elecciones de "teatro"", January 21, 2008, Cubanet.

<http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y08/en08/21o8.htm>

<sup>2</sup> "La disidencia interna en Cuba dice que elecciones son 'una burla'", January 21, 2008, Cubanet <http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y08/en08/21o8.htm>