

**CUBA: Calling on Cuban authorities to immediately release 28 writers, journalists and librarians. Urging Cuba to ratify the two human rights treaties signed in February and to introduce all legislative and judicial reforms necessary for implementation.**

**BACKGROUND:** On February 28 2008, Cuba's Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque, signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) at the United Nations (UN) in New York, making good his promise of December 2007. The two conventions are legally binding and commit the country to respect and promote a full spectrum of rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to earn a living by the profession of one's choosing, the right to health and freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment.

Signing these conventions marks a significant change in Cuba's attitude to the UN. The development follows Fidel Castro's resignation from office and the surprise release earlier in February of two journalists and a librarian. The three men were arrested and sentenced as part of a crackdown on alleged dissidents in March 18, 2003, the so-called 'Group of 75'.

But 28 other writers, journalists and librarians remain imprisoned in flagrant violation of rights guaranteed by the two treaties. Twenty-one have been imprisoned since March 2003; the other seven were detained subsequently. All are serving lengthy prison sentences - up to 27 years in some cases - on anti-state or 'social dangerousness' charges. Many are suffering from health complaints caused or exacerbated by the harsh conditions and treatment they are exposed to in prison. Despite their deteriorating health, access to adequate medical treatment is often limited.

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For a full list of honorary members, go to:

<http://www.pencanada.ca/prison/HonoraryMembers.php>

### **Appeal Letter**

Raúl Castro Ruiz  
Presidente La Habana, Cuba  
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Your Excellency:

As a member of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of International PEN, the worldwide writers' organization with centres in 145 countries, I join my colleagues in welcoming Cuba's signature of the 1966 UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the 1966 UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to these treaties by immediately releasing the 28 journalists, writers and librarians imprisoned in violation of their right to freedom of expression, as enshrined in Article 19 of the ICCPR, and other rights contained in the ICCPR and ICESCR, such as the right to earn a living by the profession of one's choosing, freedom, the right to health, and freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment.

We also urge you to ratify both the ICCPR and the ICESCR without reservations, and to introduce the necessary legislative and judicial reforms to guarantee freedom of expression and all other rights contained in the treaties.

Yours sincerely

[your name and address here]

**Please send copies of your letter to:**

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Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

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**Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:**

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