

US: Religious Leaders Urge Biden to End Blockade Against Cuba

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Below, teleSUR English reproduces in full the letter sent by the religious leaders to President Biden.

“Dear Mr. President,

We write to intercede on behalf of the Cuban people, who are facing a terrible humanitarian situation. After nearly sixty years of embargo against the country, the question you must ask yourself is whether this continuing embargo is worth it.

The Obama administration, with your support, sought to rethink the policy and seek a new engagement with Cuba, relaxing sanctions, allowing direct flights between the two countries and easing restrictions on U.S. citizens traveling to and doing business in Cuba. Former President Donald Trump reversed President Obama’s strategy. He placed Cuba back on the U.S. list of state sponsors of international terrorism, cut off travel between Cuba and the U.S., and prohibited U.S. citizens and residents from sending remittances to family members in Cuba, cutting off an important economic lifeline for many Cubans. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the problems in Cuba.

Mr. President, there is a time to tear down and a time to build up. There is a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. We ask you to make a bold decision and end the embargo against the Cuban people. We are aware that there are very significant political pressures and obstacles to this course of action.

However, driven by Christian faith and compassion, we implore you to take steps to ease the burden of the Cuban people, including:

1. Remove Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism. We see no real public evidence to believe that Cuba has the will, means and ability to sponsor global terrorism.

2. Suspend again the application of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which was suspended for a long period and was reactivated by former President Donald Trump on May 2, 2019.
3. Reinstate the category of “people-to-people” travel for educational exchange, using this general license to maintain a full-time schedule of educational and cultural exchange activities aimed at improving contact with the Cuban people.
4. Eliminate the ban on cruise ship travel and reinstate regular airline flights to all Cuban cities.
5. Suspend the State Department’s List of Prohibited Accommodations in Cuba, allowing U.S. citizens to use hotels and rental houses of their choice.
6. Eliminate the USD 1,000 per quarter cap on family remittances that a sender can send per quarter to a Cuban citizen.
7. Reactivation of non-family remittances from third countries through Western Union and companies such as Fincimex and AIS.
8. Suspend the List of Restricted Entities and Sub-entities Associated with Cuba.

Líderes religiosos del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias instaron al presidente de EEUU, Joe Biden, a levantar el bloqueo contra [#Cuba](#) y superar obstáculos políticos que se interponen. [#NoMasBloqueo](#) [#CubaNoEstaSola](#) <https://t.co/ES9CiqqTMA> a través de @viasiempreconcuba

— Siempre con Cuba (@siempreconcuba) [October 22, 2021](#)

“Religious leaders from the World Council of Churches urged US President Joe Biden to lift the blockade against Cuba and overcome political obstacles that stand in the way.”

9. Reactivate the U.S. Embassy in Havana, including its consular services.
10. Suspension of third country visa application requirements and the granting of annual visas under immigration agreements.
11. Reactivate scientific exchanges in biotechnology, health and other areas of science.

We strongly believe that there are other ways to engage with Cuban authorities to discuss and overcome disagreements on issues and legacies, without affecting people who want to live with human dignity. We ask you to consider their plight and work to overcome political obstacles to solidarity and justice.

Yours in Christ,

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Acting General Secretary
World Council of Churches

Mr. Rudelmar Bueno de Faria
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Rev. Jim Winkler
President and General Secretary
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Bishop Ivan M. Abrahams
General Secretary
World Methodist Council

Council of Churches of Cuba
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Ms. Josianne Gauthier
Secretary General
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Featured image: The World Council of Churches called on U.S. President Joe Biden to lift the blockade on Cuba. | Photo: Twitter/@almayadeen_es

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