

Cuba Commemorates Achievements on Human Rights Day



Cuba is celebrating this Monday Human Rights Day with progress and achievements recognized worldwide in health, education, culture, citizen participation and adherence to international governing instruments.

Seventy years ago, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a historic document for hundreds of millions of people, which is far from fulfilled due to poverty and discrimination.

January 1, 1959 represented a radical change on Cuba, resulting in results such as an infant mortality rate of 4.0 per 1,000 births, the lowest ever achieved in 2017, a life expectancy of more than 78 years, and schooling and literacy rates close to 100 percent.

Cuba also shows significant numbers in popular participation, among them the presence in the polls of more than 85 percent of those registered in the general elections held last March and students and workers' protagonism in the recent consultation on a new draft Constitution.

According to published data, nearly nine million Cubans attended 133,000 meetings in neighborhoods and work and study centers, where 783,000 proposals were made to improve a text which represents a total reform of the Constitution in force since 1976 and must be approved in a referendum. Cuba underwent the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights (UPR) in Geneva for the third time in May

(2009 and 2013), recognizing its achievements, including the signing and ratification of 44 out of 61 international human rights instruments.

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez explained in that forum the transformations the triumph of the Revolution represented for the Cubans, leaving behind a scenario such as the one currently suffered by millions of human beings on earth.

Since the United States military occupation that curtailed our independence, with governments imposed by it, 45 percent of children did not go to school, 85 percent of people lacked running water, farmers lived in misery without owning the land they worked, immigrants were brutally exploited', he noted.

He also recalled that 'there were no rights for workers and farmers in Cuba, extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances and acts of torture were frequent. Racial discrimination was cruel, there was a high level of poverty and girls and women were even more excluded. The Cubans' dignity was sullied and the national culture attacked'.

Rodriguez ratified the Cuba's commitment to human rights and its willingness , during the UPR, to talk about this issue.

Cuba will continue progressing, with a steady and sure step, based on the political will and commitment of the Cuban Government and people to build an increasingly free, democratic, participative, just and supportive society.

NUMBERS AND RESULTS

In health matters, the Cuban government guarantees its inhabitants universal, free and quality attention, an achievement it has shared in the last 55 years with more than a hundred countries, where its doctors have provided solidarity aid.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) declared Cuba in 2017 as one of the 15 states in the world to apply the basic policies that guarantee the good mental development of children, while it was recognized on June 30, 2015 as the first to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis.

On the other hand, Cuba eliminated 14 infectious diseases and made nine others not a problem, with rates of less than 0.1 per 100,000 inhabitants.

In terms of education, more than 1,750,000 students began the 2018-2019 school year on September 3, in a nation of 11 million people where there is universal and free coverage at all levels of education, regardless on gender, skin color, religion, political views and family economic situation.

According to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015, drafted by UNESCO, Cuba is the only country in Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve all the global objectives 2000-2015, placing it as a state of high educational development, in 28th place worldwide in the Education for All Development Index.

Regarding culture, there is a broad network of institutions in the 15 provinces consisting of cultural houses, bookstores, museums and libraries, and full access to arts education is guaranteed at the elementary, middle and higher levels.

The issue of human rights is, paradoxically, one of the spearheads of the crusade led by the United States against the Cuban Revolution, despite the fact the northern nation has a dubious history in this area, which would require only an analysis that it is only part of 18 out of the 61 international instruments in force.

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