Cuba: From May 13th to 15th, hundreds of Cubans are demanding freedom for political prisoners

Frankfurt am Main / Havana, May 14, 2020 - Yesterday morning hundreds of Cubans inside and outside of Cuba started fasting for three days. They are calling
for the freedom of all political prisoners in Cuba and the end of state repression. The activists organized themselves on Twitter under the hashtag #AyunoContraElCrimen. The protesters also include dissident Jose Daniel Ferrer, who was recently released from a more than 100-day arbitrary detention. One of the largest waves of arrests is taking place right now, as reported by the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR).

One of the central demands of the strikers is the release of journalist Roberto Quiñones, who is still detained, according to the ISHR. Quiñones was arrested eight months ago after reporting on the lawsuit against a couple of pastors who were teaching their children at home instead of sending them to the state school.

Reminder of the Varela project - the referendum

The strikers also commemorate civil rights activist Orlando Zapata Tamayo, who died nine years ago. Zapata Tamayo was the founder and member of a freedom movement in Las Tunas and was actively involved in the Varela project, which aimed for a referendum to democratize the Cuban constitution. In March 2003, he was arrested with 75 other civil rights activists and sentenced to 15 years in prison for “disturbing public order”. On December 3, 2009, he went on a hunger strike to protest the abuse and torture and the human right to physical integrity for the political prisoners in Cuba. On February 24, 2010, he died at the age of 43 from the consequences of his hunger strike.

Fines for bloggers and journalists – Law Decree 370

Journalists are particularly affected by the current
wave of arrests. The Cuban authorities take advantage of Law Decree 370. The ISHR, which has a section in Cuba, criticizes the fact that fines and arrests are used on a daily basis to prevent critical publications. This was particularly true with regard to the lack of measures to deal with the corona pandemic. “Law Decree 370 violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the Cuban Constitution, which guarantees in Article 4 freedom of thought, conscience and expression”, said the ISHR. In an appeal with 30 other non-governmental organizations, the ISHR is calling for the regulation to be suspended.

More information about Cuba