

News From...



## The Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness

Chairman Dan Burton (R ~ IN)

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### CHAIRMAN BURTON TO ADDRESS THE ONGOING BRUTALITY OF THE CASTRO REGIME IN CUBA

#### *-“Living in Fear: The Continued Human Rights Abuses in Castro’s Cuba”-*

Washington, D.C. – The Cuban government, led by Communist Dictator Fidel Castro, has had a long history of atrocious human rights violations since he assumed power on January 1, 1959. In recent years, Castro has executed several outrageous initiatives, such as the March 2003 Dissident Crackdown, in an effort to squash all opposition to his totalitarian regime. In fact, Castro has ordered the arrest of numerous writers, poets, and pro-democracy activists, and charged them with “crimes against the country.” These unjust campaigns have led to the wrongful incarceration of hundreds of peaceful Cuban dissidents for indefinite sentences, leaving their families with no avenue for appeal.

Congressman Dan Burton (R-IN), Chairman of the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness, will hold an oversight hearing entitled, **“Living in Fear: The Continued Human Rights Abuses in Castro’s Cuba” on Wednesday, June 16, 2004, in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building at 10:00 a.m.** The Subcommittee plans to examine President Bush’s comprehensive Cuba policy plan, as well as the international community’s ongoing efforts to end the egregious human rights violations perpetrated by Castro.

“For far too long, Cubans have endured repeated violations of their most basic human rights and have been forced to live under the brutal oppression of a tyrannical dictator, Fidel Castro,” stated Chairman Burton. “I whole-heartedly stand behind President Bush’s initiatives to hasten the arrival of a new, free, and democratic Cuba.”

Currently, the United States along with democratic members of the international community have taken bold actions in response to the harsh and unjust imprisonment of peaceful political dissidents in Cuba. The U.S. has imposed a series of strict trade sanctions and travel restrictions, to send a clear message to the Castro regime and those supporting it, that the U.S. will not tolerate such oppressive actions. In addition, on April 15, 2004, the United Nations Human Rights Commission passed a U.S.-backed resolution stating that Cuba “should refrain from adopting measures which could jeopardize the fundamental rights” of its citizens. Furthermore, the European Union took action last year, when member states imposed stern measures against Cuba, which include: suspending high-level diplomatic visits, reviewing the value of cultural exchanges, and inviting dissident activists to diplomatic events as a call to Fidel Castro to end these unlawful incarcerations.

Previously, Congressman Burton, then Chairman of the House International Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, introduced the *Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act* (H.R. 927, also known as *the Helms-Burton Act* or *the LIBERTAD Act*). *The Helms-Burton Act* placed trade sanctions on the Castro government, as well as outlined a plan for the support of a transitional government that would eventually lead to a democratically elected Cuban government.

**PANEL ONE WITNESSES:**

**The Honorable Ambassador Michael Kozak**  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labor  
United States Department of State

**The Honorable David Mutchler**  
Senior Advisor on Cuba  
United States Agency for International Development

**PANEL TWO WITNESSES:**

**Mr. Jaime Suchlicki**  
Director  
Cuban Transition Project  
University of Miami

**Mr. Omar Lopez Montenegro**  
Executive Director  
Cuban American National Foundation

**Mr. José Miguel Bianco**  
Director of Latin American Affairs  
Human Rights Watch

**Mr. Eric Olson**  
Advocacy Director for the Americas  
Amnesty International

**Mr. Miguel Reyes**  
Stepson of Raul Rivero – famed poet imprisoned in the March 2003 Dissident Crackdown

This is the Subcommittee's second hearing regarding human rights violations in Cuba. For more information, or to look at hearing resource materials, please visit Chairman Burton's designated human rights section on his website at [www.house.gov/burton/humanrights](http://www.house.gov/burton/humanrights).