

# About the July 11 protests in Cuba

Via [Comunistas](#)

Six days after the events and after a careful analysis, Communists makes known its official position on the protests that took place in Cuba last Sunday, July 11.

Almost simultaneously and with greater or lesser intensity, on Sunday, July 11 Cuba experienced a series of social explosions that covered at least 6 of the 14 provinces that make up the country. In the 62 years since the triumph of the Revolution led by Comandante Fidel Castro, Cuba had never faced a situation like this.

Although the first protests initially began peacefully, almost all of the demonstrations were eventually marked by violence, which was exercised by both sides. This series of simultaneous anti-government demonstrations is an event never seen before in socialist Cuba. This is a necessary factor to take into account in order to understand the events.

It is worth remembering that the last mass protests in Cuba date back to August 5, 1994, later known as the Maleconazo, which was contained within hours with Fidel Castro's presence on the scene. A demonstration of 200 people chanting anti-government slogans in a central location is almost inconceivable in Cuban society. However, at least in Havana, a spontaneous march of at least 3,000 people was held.

## **The events in Havana**

The protests – sparked by a demonstration in the city of San Antonio de los Baños, located no more than 100 kilometers from the capital – spread quickly to Havana. Shortly after 3pm local time, around 200 people took over the centrally located

Parque de La Fraternidad, then moved to the Capitol (the official seat of Parliament).

During the first hour of the protest, police arrests were cordoned off, allowing, at least tacitly, the protesters to move towards the central Máximo Gómez Park, located between the Spanish embassy and the headquarters of the National Office of the Young Communist Union. At that time, more than 500 people were peacefully gathered on the park's esplanade, while arrests continued to be made punctually.

Later, a group of approximately 100 people, waving Cuban and 26th of July Movement flags with socialist and pro-government slogans, peacefully took over Máximo Gómez Park. At the same time, other groups linked to the Communist Party and the Communist Youth Union, along with cadets from the Ministry of the Interior, eventually occupied the area.

The demonstrators voluntarily demobilized and it seemed that in Havana, at least where they originated, the protests had ended, almost peacefully. Later, however, it became known that the march became a long demonstration, which traveled through important streets of Havana. As the protest march progressed, people joined in, with unofficial sources reporting between 2000 and 3000 demonstrators chanting anti-government slogans.

At one point, the protesters decided to head towards the emblematic Plaza de la Revolución, where the headquarters of the presidency, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of the Armed Forces, and the main national newspapers are located. In the vicinity of Plaza de la Revolución, the demonstration was repelled by the forces of law and order and pro-government civilian groups, leading to violent clashes between the two sides, which resulted in an unknown number of arrests and injuries.

At the same time, on Calzada de 10 de Octubre, Havana,

seriously violent events occurred, where two police cars were overturned. Subsequently, videos were released of serious acts of vandalism, including the stoning of a children's hospital. The death of civilian Diubis Laurencio Tejeda was confirmed during the protests. No other deaths have been reported so far as a result of the demonstrations. Violence, mainly with stones and sticks, was carried out by both the protesters and the civilians who came out to confront them. The number of people injured on both sides is unknown. The number of people arrested at the scene is also unknown, as are any subsequent arrests linked to the protests. We still do not know the number of citizens who six days later are still in irregular detention.

While the protests were taking place in Havana, similar events took place in the cities of Bayamo, Manzanillo, Camagüey, Santiago de Cuba, and Holguin, among others of lesser intensity, which also ended, or even began, violently.

### **Origin and essence of the protests**

The protests that took place in Cuba on July 11 cannot be understood as a confrontation between counterrevolutionaries and communists, as the government tried to do; nor of oppressed people against the dictatorship, as bourgeois propaganda insisted; nor of revolutionary working class against the politically degenerated bureaucracy.

The July 11 protests brought all three perspectives together at the same time: counterrevolutionary organizations – paid by the US – violently attacking the Communist Party; groups of intellectuals feeling their civil liberties severely curtailed facing censorship; and the working class demanding from the government improvements in their living conditions. However, while this last variant was the overwhelming majority, it cannot be understood as a politically conscious socialist mass demanding more socialism from the stagnant bureaucracy.

## **The July 11 protests can be characterized in nine essential points:**

1 – The vast majority of the demonstrators were not connected to counterrevolutionary organizations, nor were the protests led by counterrevolutionary organizations. The main cause of the demonstrations was the discontent generated by the terrible shortages caused by the economic crisis, the economic sanctions imposed by the US government, and the questionable and inefficient management of the state bureaucracy. It was the shortage of food and toiletries, the existence of freely convertible money stores that can only be accessed through foreign money and that hoard an important part of the supply of basic products; the long lines to buy basic foods like bread; the shortage of medicines; the restriction on the deposit of cash dollars in banks; the increase in the prices of public services (transportation in Havana has increased the price of fares by 500%); the cutting of gratuities; the drastic increase in inflation; the increase in the price of basic products; and the long power cuts, the objective factors that have caused a scenario conducive to a social explosion.

At the same time, let's not forget that Cuba is experiencing its biggest economic crisis in 30 years. Cuba needed the visit of 4.5 million tourists and stable prices in the international market for its Gross Domestic Product to grow at least 1% in 2020. By 2020, Cuba received only 23% of the needed tourists, or 1.5 million tourists, and the world economy went into crisis. The decline in foreign visitors resulted in the loss of about \$3 billion in 2020. Cuba imports about 80% of its food and the government spends \$2 billion on this.

Except for a modest recovery in China, all of Cuba's other trading partners have fallen into economic recession. By June 2021, Cuba had received only just over 130,000 tourists. Most of the country's reserves had been used up by 2020. The costs of public care in dealing with the coronavirus caused serious damage to the Cuban economy. To this must be added the severe

sanctions imposed by Donald Trump, which were not lifted by President Joe Biden, intensifying the already accumulated impact of the blockade.

However, the reasons why the Cuban economy is in crisis do not matter to the working family when it comes to serving at the table, even more so when the political legitimacy of the government is progressively deteriorating.

2 – The government's political legitimacy is considerably diminished. The official political discourse is far from effective; it does not reach the youth. The political propaganda of the official youth organizations is alien to the youth. As an example of this, there were a large number of young people among the participants in the protests (an exact number is impossible to give at the moment). At the same time, the political wear and tear of several years of crisis and the accumulated mistakes of the state administration in general have an impact. In addition, the current government lacks the political legitimacy of the historical leadership of the Revolution. The separation between the country's leadership and the working class is becoming increasingly visible, and a gap in living conditions is being called into question.

3 – The protests originated in working-class neighborhoods with the greatest social problems. Social inequality is a growing problem in Cuban society. Poverty, social neglect, precarious public and social policies, limited supply of food and basic products from the state, as well as impoverished cultural policies, are predominant characteristics in peripheral or low-income neighborhoods. In these areas, political consciousness tends to diminish, with the rigors of precariousness and survival prevailing over ideology. Moreover, political discourse often runs parallel to the daily needs of working people. In contrast to this socioeconomic situation, in the imagination of these economically vulnerable neighborhoods, the leadership of the country is associated with high standards of living.

4 – The protests have not had a majority character. The majority of the Cuban population continues to support the government. While it is true that the protesters had support among some of the residents of the areas where the events took place, an important sector of the population also rejected and has rejected the protests. Although the protests in Havana generally gathered around 5,000 people, it would be a complete lack of objectivity to say that the demonstrations had majority support. Despite the political deterioration suffered by the Cuban government, it is taking advantage of the political capital of the Revolution, capitalizing on Fidel Castro's image and maintaining hegemony over the socialist imaginary. It is largely thanks to these factors that it has achieved considerable political legitimacy among the majorities.

5 – There were no socialist slogans in the protests. The slogans launched at the demonstrations focused on "Patria y Vida," "Libertad," "Down with the dictatorship," and offenses against President Miguel Díaz-Canel. "Patria y Vida" is a slogan born from an openly right-wing song, propagandized from Miami and by the right-wing opposition. The other slogans mentioned have the character of demands for citizens' freedom, which do not imply socialist demands. Besides the demands against censorship and the demand for greater civil liberties, the slogan "Down with the dictatorship" is a slogan used and capitalized by the Cuban right and the counter-revolution. Members of the Editorial Board of the Communists spoke with several demonstrators who were not against Fidel Castro or Socialism, but were demanding better living conditions. However, this differentiation was not made explicit in the protests.

6 – A minority sector of intellectuals were connected to the protests. A minority group of intellectuals, grouped mainly in the 27N movement, demanded civil liberties, centered on the right to free creation and expression. However, this was not

the central character of the protests. To a large extent, this was due to the fact that the demands of the dissident intelligentsia did not meet the needs of the majority, who demanded basic requirements for a better life.

7 – The lumpemproletariat played a significant role. In the protests, the lumpemproletariat played a significant role. These groups engaged in looting and aggressive vandalism, which distorted the peaceful start of the demonstrations in Havana.

8 – It is increasingly certain that the propaganda of the counterrevolution had an organizing character in the protests. While this was not the main factor that triggered the protests, it is undeniable that a strong right-wing campaign was orchestrated from the United States on social networks, openly focused on overthrowing the Cuban government. This campaign had a strong impact on a significant sector of the population. It should be kept in mind that 4.4 million Cubans have access to social networks from their cell phones.

9 – The demonstrations ended up being marked by violence. In Havana, initially, except for isolated events, the demonstrations in the center of the capital were peaceful. However, in the capital, the demonstration degenerated into a serious confrontation with police forces and pro-government citizens when the demonstrators tried to gain access to the Revolution Square, where the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the seat of government, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, and the headquarters of most of the national newspapers are located. At that time, violence erupted on both sides, causing serious injuries to civilians. At the same time, violent groups carried out acts of vandalism and attacked communist militants and government supporters with sticks and stones.

**Why was comrade Frank García Hernández, founder of our Editorial Committee, arrested?**

Comrade Frank García Hernández, who was on his way to the house of a friend, with whom he had been with since the beginning of the demonstration, accidentally ended up at the site of the violent clashes that took place near the Plaza de la Revolución, but just as they were coming to an end. Comrade Frank had been present at the protest from the beginning, but as a member of the Communist Party. When the protesters left the Parque Máximo Gómez (around 6:00 pm), Frank and the comrade assumed that the protest was over, which is why they both went to the girl's house. She lives less than 200 meters from where the violent clashes took place between the protesters and the police, who were trying to prevent the protest from entering the Plaza de la Revolución.

According to Comrade Frank, when they reached the corner of Ayestarán and Aranguren streets, shots were fired into the air. Both ended up inside a pro-government group that was marching accompanied by police officers. At that moment, Comrade Frank accidentally meets Maykel Gonzalez, director of the pro-LGBTIQ rights magazine Tremenda Nota, a publication that reproduced Communist texts. Maykel Gonzalez had participated in the course of events, from the birth of the march to the violent events between the two groups, joining the protesters, though without carrying out any violent acts.

Just as the protests were coming to an end in the presence of Comrade Frank Garcia, a policeman arrested Maykel Gonzalez, falsely accusing him of having thrown stones at the forces of public order. Faced with this, Comrade Frank García, as a Communist Party militant, tried to calmly intercede between the officer and Maykel González. While trying to convince the policeman, asking him not to arrest Maykel Gonzalez, Frank Garcia was also arrested by the officer. The officer accused Frank of violent acts and siding with the protesters. This accusation was later proven false by the authorities.

The arrest took place around 7 pm. The two were taken to the police station. Both were taken to the nearest police station.

Then, at around 1:30 in the morning, Frank was taken to another detention center, where the facts were immediately clarified, proving that he had not taken part in any violent act, nor in the group that opposed the demonstrations. Along with the director of Tremenda Nota, Maykel González Vivero, comrade Frank García Hernández was released on Monday, July 12, around 8:00 pm. During his detention of just over 24 hours, Frank claims that he was NOT physically abused or tortured in any way. Frank García is not currently under house arrest, but is under a preventative measure where his ability to move about is regulated, limited to his place of work and medical access. However, Frank is not required to make any statement to the authorities about his daily movements. The legal measure is part of the procedure to be followed until his non-participation in violent acts and demonstration is officially proven.

The Editorial Board of the Communists is grateful for the overwhelming wave of international solidarity that has been raised to demand the release of Frank García Hernández. The Communists will soon publish a detailed report on the internationalist campaign, in which we will give just recognition to the people and organizations that fought for our comrade's freedom.

It is worth noting that no other member of the Editorial Board, collaborator or comrade close to our publication was arrested during the protests. Based on our basic sense of revolutionary justice, this does not prevent us from demanding the immediate release of the others arrested during the July 11 demonstrations, provided they have not committed actions that have attempted against the lives of others.

Somewhere in Cuba, July 17, 2021, Editorial Committee of the Communists

**NOTE:** As this statement goes to press, Communists is aware of the call from both the government and the opposition to take

to the streets. It appears that both sides have called for a rally at the same point in Havana known as La Piragua. Communistas rejects both calls as irresponsible, considering the gravity of the health situation with the coronavirus, with over 6,000 cases per day. But we condemn even more strongly any possible act of violence that may occur in the confrontation between the two groups.