

Washington DC. USA

May 24, 2012

This is written by: Reverend Carlos A. Lamelas, minister of the Abundant Life Church of God in Dallas, Texas. I am originally from Cuba.

We came to the United States on July 7, 2011, through the United States Refugee Program, because of the persecution of and attacks aimed at me and at my family over the course of the twenty-year period when I worked in the ministry in Cuba, our country of origin.

Through this declaration I wish to denounce the repressive methods and mechanisms used by the Castro regime (which never was nor intended to be communist).

I also offer my humble but firm recommendations regarding the treatment that this dictatorial regime should received from the international community.

A brief biographical summary:

I was born in the City of Havana, Cuba. I was an expert diver and worked as an inspector in the Intermar S.A. International Agency for the Inspection and Repair of Breakdowns. I became a Christian and a few years later I decided to study and to enter into full time Christian ministry in the Church of God in Cuba.

I had difficulties with the political authorities in the city in which I worked from the beginning of my ministry. This was for the simple reason that I admitted Mr. Manuel Acosta as a member of our congregation. He was a human rights leader on the Isla de la Juventud and the authorities considered him to be "inconvenient".

Later, my wife and I refused to sign the Castro campaign, "Yes, for Cuba", a scheme of the Castro government to change the Constitution of the Republic and in that way to block any possible success of the Varela Project.

We suffered verbal attacks and threats because of our firm refusal to vote in this campaign. Even the members of our church were threatened and received warnings from the authorities.

When the General Assembly of the Church of God elected me as National President of the Institution, defying the prediction of government officials, the repressive actions intensified. They attempted numerous times to reverse the Assembly's decision without success. I was arrested twice by the National Police and a third time by State Security agents.

The G-2 [Cuban intelligence services] forced three false witnesses to accuse me of supposed human trafficking, with the sole aim of getting rid of me. This resulted in my four and a half month imprisonment in a cell in Villa Marista, the Detention Centre for crimes against State security.

Thanks to the actions of solidarity by institutions like Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Open Doors, and thousands of Christians around the world who began to take an interest in my situation and to send letters of encouragement and faith (they arrived weekly at the prison and at my home), the government decided to change the location of my imprisonment from the cell to my home. I stayed there until the day of my trial, and although I was found innocent of all the charges, I remained in a kind of unofficial imprisonment. I was never allowed to work in the ministry again.

While I was in prison, my wife was forced to close the church and she was constantly watched and followed by government agents. They would frequently stop her in the streets, in public, to bodily search her.

My case is far from being an isolated case and it is even less so the worst of the repression suffered by Christian ministries in Cuba. The difference perhaps was that I was blessed to have had my case made public in the international media.

For this reason, it is my responsibility to speak out about the repressive and unscrupulous manipulations of this decaying regime.

In this declaration, I urge whoever can do so, to judge the Castro government as violators of the most basic human rights. They extend their arms, like an octopus, to repress not only Cuban civil society but also all believers, including church hierarchies, which on occasion work in complicity with them.

I denounce, and am prepared to testify before any authority, that:

The Cuban Council of Churches is a body linked to the Castro government and is faithful to their interests.

The Ministry of Justice, the National Registry of Associations, and the Office for the Attention of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, also serve the government to repress, control, and exercise authority over the Cuban Church. Through coercion and force, they put in place leaders who are loyal to the regime and who will faithfully repeat the discourse dictated to them by the Castro brothers. In this way, they ensure that member denominations of the Cuban Council of Churches are committed to the government and betray their most sacred pastoral mission to stand alongside the weakest in society.

In brotherly love, in Him,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by several loops and a final horizontal stroke.

Reverend Carlos A. Lamelas
Pastor