

# *CUBA: BLACKOUT AND BLOCKADE / By Silvio Rodriguez*

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CUBA: BLACKOUT AND BLOCKADE  
By Silvio Rodriguez / Renowned Cuban singer/songwriter

Cuba is going through its biggest energy crisis, with practically the entire island and 10 of 11 million inhabitants deprived of electricity. The blackouts that had been occurring with increasing frequency and duration for some time, became a total collapse of the electrical system following the shutdown of its main thermoelectric plant on Thursday, October 17th, which forced the suspension of classes and the closure of almost all economic activity while the authorities and technicians work to restore the flow. The population fears that this situation will lead to hunger due to the putrefaction of food.

The immediate cause of the crisis is the lack of fuel to feed its thermoelectric plants, worsened by a climatic situation that delayed the arrival of a ship with fuel oil. However, the ultimate cause is the same as that shared by the large and small problems of the island: the commercial and financial blockade imposed by Washington more than six decades ago with the declared purpose of starving the Cuban population and forcing it to rise up against its authorities. Although this sinister objective has been frustrated, the endless difficulties that Havana must face in obtaining foreign currency and acquiring essential supplies have led the country to a lacerating shortage of everything necessary for daily life.

It is often thought that the argument of the blockade is a mere pretext and the criminal nature of the dozens of laws and decrees that make up the densest network of unarmed aggressions directed against a sovereign nation is forgotten. As an island located in the Caribbean Sea, Cuba's natural economic vocation is in tourism, and its location just 144 kilometers from the United States makes Americans its logical and essential market. But Washington's illegal regulations prohibit its citizens from traveling to the island. The illegal application of sanctions not only affects the inhabitants of the superpower, but any company, from any part of the planet, that buys or sells any object - be it an onion, a medicine for cancer or a notebook for children to study - to Havana is subject to persecution and crushing by the country that dictatorially controls the global financial system. One of the most important sources of income for practically all Latin American and Caribbean states, remittances sent by their compatriots working abroad, is also closed to Cuba because it is not allowed access to the international payment system, one of the many tentacles of U.S. imperialism.

Since Hugo Chavez democratically came to power in Venezuela at the head of the Bolivarian Revolution, Caracas has provided invaluable assistance to the Cuban people with its hydrocarbon shipments. But as Washington has made Venezuelans victims of the same atrocities it perpetrates against Cubans, the government of Nicolas Maduro has had to cut its aid to Cuba, which has made an extremely precarious situation even worse. Likewise, Havana is prevented from buying machinery, tools and spare parts to reverse the deterioration of the electrical energy infrastructure, so the failures will continue to be structural as long as Washington's boot suffocates the island. Cuba is also not allowed to access the technologies necessary to undertake the energy transition, despite the fact that, in their discourse, the current occupant of the White House and other Western leaders proclaim themselves promoters of the fight against climate change.

In the present century, with the exception of Israel against the Palestinian people, no country has been as systematically and enduringly sadistic towards the civilian population as the United States in its attack on the Cubans. The human suffering and the deprivation of any prospect of a dignified life in their own land are testimony to the total disregard of the American political class for the well-being of the people and the freedom in whose name they speak.

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