

# *CUBANS ARE THE ONLY ONES CALLED ON TO DECIDE THE FUTURE OF CUBA*

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*By Pedro Martínez Pírez*

Just a few hours after US Secretary of State John Kerry spoke in Havana about democracy and human rights in his speech at the official reopening of the US Embassy in Cuba, the New York Times revealed that a Yemeni prisoner remains on a hunger strike at the prison on the U.S. Guantanamo Naval Base.

His name is Tariq Ba Odah, thirty seven years old, who is on a hunger strike since 2007 and is being force-fed by his jailers. Tariq presents very serious signs of physical and psychological deterioration.

He is one of 116 prisoners forcefully brought to their current jail from distant nations, and locked up in a prison created thirteen years ago. The prison belongs to the US Government and is located inside a military base that it illegally occupies in the Eastern Cuban province of Guantanamo.

It is a well known fact that inside that illegal prison, cruel and systematic tortures have been forcefully applied against the prisoners, who have lacked any juridical or diplomatic protection whatsoever.

The closure of that prison was one of the electoral promises of Barak Obama during his campaign for the Presidency, but has still not been fulfilled as he approaches the end of his second mandate at the White House.

That illegal prison, by the way, is inside another huge violation perpetrated by the United States against Cuba when over one century ago it imposed on Cuba a treaty with no date of conclusion for the installation of a US Navy base, in open violation of Cuban sovereignty.

That jail, the U.S. Naval base, the blockade, the illegal U.S. radio and TV broadcasts to Cuba, the financing of mercenary groups against the Island, and the still unpaid financial compensation for human and material damages inflicted on Cuba and its people are issues still pending on the agenda to reach the full normalization of links between the two country, that, according to Secretary Kerry are no longer enemies nor rivals, but neighbors.

Furthering the observation by Josè Martí, Cuba's National Hero, that in politics, the only true facts are those that remain invisible, we would like to see the full materialization of what John Kerry said in Havana: that it is the Cuban people themselves who are called on to decide the future of Cuba.

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