

Ignacio Ramonet sends open letter to U.S. President Joe Biden

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Havana, September 6 (RHC/ACN)-- Journalist Ignacio Ramonet has sent an open letter to U.S. President Joe Biden, arguing that he should exclude Cuba from the list of States sponsoring terrorism.

In the text, Ignacio Ramonet highlights that given Biden's presidential term is about to end, he could repair "a profound injustice committed on January 12, 2021 by his predecessor, Donald Trump, when, a few weeks before leaving the White House, he decided -- without real legal basis -- to re-inscribe Cuba on the infamous list of States sponsoring terrorism."

Below is the full text of the open letter to Biden.

Havana-based Casa de las Americas has written an introductory paragraph, inviting others to sign-on to the letter.

Our dear friend Ignacio Ramonet sent us this open letter to the President of the United States. Casa de las Américas supports this noble initiative and invites writers, artists, cultural promoters, academics, activists and social fighters, members of non-governmental organizations and people sensitive to the daily suffering of the Cuban people to support it with their signature.

To join, please do so by email: casadelasamericas2024@gmail.com

A huge embrace from Havana.

OPEN LETTER FROM IGNACIO RAMONET TO PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

"Take Cuba off the list of sponsors of terrorism!"

Ignacio Ramonet

Professor. Writer. Journalist

Paris (France)

Mr. Joseph R. Biden

President of the United States of America

Washington DC (USA)

Mr. President Joe Biden,

Your presidential term ends in a few months. I would like to write to you, with all due respect, on behalf of a significant number of people, social movements, unions, humanitarian associations and non-governmental organizations throughout the world who are signing this letter with me and who are expecting a gesture from you to repair a profound injustice committed on January 12, 2021 by your predecessor, Donald Trump, when, a few weeks before leaving the White House, he decided -- without any real legal basis -- to re-inscribe Cuba on the infamous list of State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT list).

Mr. President, as you know, the SSOT list is a foreign policy mechanism designed by the United States Department of State to sanction those countries that "repeatedly support acts of international terrorism."

Mr. President, in an act of justice and political lucidity, the Administration of President Barack Obama, of which you were a part, had removed Cuba from that dishonorable list in 2015. This represented a very positive step towards forging, at last, a more constructive relationship with Havana. During the Government of Barack Obama, when you were Vice-President of the United States, it was indeed possible to move towards a normalization of diplomatic relations between two neighbors with different

political systems. but willing to understand each other based on mutual respect.

Mr. President, you are not unaware that Cuba has always denounced and fought terrorism. It has never encouraged or sponsored it. It has never practiced it. For 65 years, despite the tensions that may have existed between the United States and Cuba, not a single case of violent action occurring on U.S. soil that was sponsored, directly or indirectly, by Havana can be cited. Not a single case! On the other hand, Cuba has been one of the countries most attacked by terrorist organizations. More than 3,500 Cuban citizens have died in attacks committed by terrorist groups financed, armed and trained by violent organizations based, for the most part, in the United States. In other words, it is the world upside down. And you know it.

Mr. President, you are also aware that by having -- unjustly -- included Cuba on that SSOT list, numerous and painful unilateral coercive measures are applied to this country and all its innocent people. The most atrocious consequences arise from the risk associated with any type of humanitarian aid, business, investment and trade that involves Cuba and, by extension, its citizens. For example, Cubans with foreign citizenship who qualify for an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) waiver to travel to the United States have been denied that waiver. Cubans residing in the European Union have had their bank accounts closed because, by virtue of their country being on the SSOT list, they automatically become "high-risk clients." Many religious groups have had their funds frozen and humanitarian aid shipments to the island blocked. People who try to make a money transfer through PayPal or Wise to relatives in Cuba can see their funds frozen and their accounts blocked. Most banks refuse to process Cuban payments and have even frozen sums of money destined for humanitarian activities. Cuba's presence on the SSOT list limits, for individuals, the opening of bank accounts abroad, the use of instruments for international collections and payments, access to digital banking, the contracting of servers and online services, and a thousand other impediments.

Mr. President, the inclusion of Cuba on the SSOT list also means that foreign travelers from countries included in the ESTA who wish to visit Cuba must apply for a special visa at the Consulate General of the U.S. Embassy in their country of origin. This policy, implemented by your Administration, has a detrimental impact on the Cuban tourism industry, a sector of decisive importance for the island's fragile economy.

Mr. President, as you know, all this adds to the terrible consequences of the cruel and illegal economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba that your country's government has maintained for more than 60 years -- ignoring the clear position of the international community and the successive resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly -- with the aim of generating a situation of shortages and discontent among the population that leads to protests against Cuban authorities.

Mr. President, such an aggressive plan, which has caused so much pain and so much suffering to the innocent civilians of Cuba, has reached in the last decade -- as your own wife Jill Biden was able to confirm during her tour of the island in October 2016 -- inhuman dimensions of punishment. The Cuban people lack access to many basic goods and resources: medicines, food, construction materials, fertilizers, energy, industrial machinery, spare parts that cannot be imported because Cuba is on that list. The current wave of migration of Cuban expatriates to the United States, unprecedented in its magnitude, is perhaps the most illustrative example of the devastating impact and suffering caused by the extreme and brutal measures against the Cuban economy derived from both the criminal blockade and the unjust inclusion of Cuba on the infamous SSOT list.

Mr. President, you are also aware that, in May 2024, the State Department made the decision to remove Cuba from the list of "States that do not cooperate in the fight against terrorism." A correct and fair decision. Despite this, and in a contradictory, incongruous, confusing and unjustifiable manner, your Administration insists on keeping Cuba on the SSOT list, the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. How is it possible to affirm, at the same time, that Cuba does cooperate in the global fight against terrorism, and at

the same time accuse Havana of openly sponsoring terrorism? The best way to clarify this contradiction is to immediately remove Cuba from the SSOT list.

Mr. President, Cuba is not a sponsor of terrorism. On the contrary, Cuba is a sponsor of peace. And you know it. Because you undoubtedly remember that, when you were Vice-President of the United States, in 2016, the Peace Accords between the State of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), at that time considered a "terrorist organization," were signed in Havana. These agreements put an end to more than half a century of war and killings, and even earned Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos the Nobel Peace Prize. This would not have been possible without the active diplomatic participation of the Cuban Government.

Mr. President, this pacification was so striking that, starting in 2018, the Colombian Government of President Juan Manuel Santos asked Cuba to host a process of talks with leaders of another armed organization, the National Liberation Army (ELN), after Ecuador's decision to renounce hosting the event. As you recall, these talks with the ELN were halted following a heinous attack in Bogotá in 2019 involving a car bomb that destroyed a police academy, causing numerous victims, and for which the ELN claimed responsibility.

Mr. President, following this tragedy, the Government of Iván Duque requested the extradition to Colombia of the ELN leaders who, protected by a special diplomatic status, were in Cuba for peace negotiations. Havana was unable to grant this request. Indeed, international diplomatic agreements do not allow it, since extradition would violate the protocols established as guarantor of the peace talks between the ELN and the Colombian government. Norway, another key guarantor country of these peace talks, was in full agreement with Havana's position, as was the vast majority of governments. However, this legitimate rejection by Havana was the pretext used by your predecessor Donald Trump, in January 2021, to once again include Cuba on the abominable SSOT list.

Mr. President, Cuba has not ceased to promote peace. Proof of this is that, in 2022, Gustavo Petro, the new President of Colombia, announced that the request for extradition of the ELN leaders would be withdrawn as part of his "total peace" initiative. Havana, for its part, agreed to once again host and guarantee the peace talks between Bogotá and the ELN. As you know, thanks to Cuba's mediation, on June 9, 2023, in Havana, President Gustavo Petro and Antonio García, rebel commander of the ELN, shook hands in a meeting where, for the first time, a point of the agreed agenda was agreed upon and a bilateral ceasefire was agreed upon, which constitutes a historic step towards the silence of arms and definitive peace in Colombia. This ceasefire, by the way, was renewed in Havana six months later, after crucial efforts by the Cuban Government. Months later, Cuba welcomed a new proposal from the Colombian government to be the guarantor and alternative venue for another peace process, this time with the armed rebel group Segunda Marquetalia.

Mr. President, Cuba is not only a promoter of peace, but like no other country in the world, it promotes health. Over the past twenty years, Havana has sent more than 600,000 health professionals and technicians to some 165 countries. This has meant alleviating the suffering of many sick people and saving the lives of millions of people throughout the world.

Mr. President, Cuba is not only a promoter of peace and health, but like no other country, it also promotes education, as UNESCO itself has widely recognized. Thousands of Cuban teachers and professors have intervened in dozens of countries to combat illiteracy and promote the schooling of millions of girls and boys. That is the very opposite of "promoting terrorism"...

Mr. President, in 2021, shortly after you took office, several senior officials in your Administration promised that they would review Cuba's inclusion on the SSOT list. In October 2022, your own Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, reiterated that promise. In 2023, forty-six Congressmen, many of them Democrats, sent you a letter asking you to keep that promise. In June 2024, during the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council, in a joint statement, no less than 123 countries demanded the same from

your Government. But, despite the promises and such important requests, you continue to do nothing to end this outrageous injustice.

Mr. President, this situation must end. You know it. There is not a single valid and reasonable argument to accuse Cuba and keep its population under an illegal and inhuman collective punishment. You have the authority to, before leaving the White House, correct such cruel absurdity and remove Cuba from the SSOT list. Do it now!

Hoping that you, Mr. President, will rise to the occasion of this historic moment and heed this request.

I respectfully bid you farewell,

Ignacio Ramonet

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