

What's better, let's unite together for our rights. By: Oswaldo Payá

A proposal by Representative David Rivera of the United States Congress that would prohibit Cuban political refugees to travel to Cuba until five years after their arrival to that country has generated great debate. To defend all of the rights of Cubans and among those, the right to enter and leave their own country freely is not a matter of political position; it is the vocation, determination and reason of being of our Movement. For this we reject the proposal by this congress.

But I do not deny that Mr. Rivera is addressing a real problem and a situation that justly deserves an analysis, a debate and conducted for the good of the Cuban people, of which the exile is an inseparable part. But also with respect to the North American society, that with a great sentiment of solidarity, has received and continues to receive many Cubans. We cannot forget that these Cubans that have arrived through various channels of refugee programs , through the lottery, family reunification, risking their lives at sea or "staying" for some occasion, look for a new life of freedom and opportunities that are denied to them in their own country.

Without trying to be a judge, because I am a part of this society, I call on the reflection of the responsibility of everyone in this situation.

The political refugees are Cubans who emigrate because they are persecuted here in their own country and this should not deprive them of the right to return to see their family and the country that they had to leave because of this persecution. Is the punishment that the communist regime imposes on them not punishment enough, that they should also be punished with the denial of seeing their loved ones even if it is only for a few days and under surveillance? All Cubans who emigrate should have the same rights.

That which is not a right, but an attempt against that right, is to obtain political refugee status from lies and deceit, whether from here or when arriving in another county or also from goodwill but sometimes ignorance of those who are granting this status. The defense is permitted and is legitimate for everyone looking for a new life in a new land, but not at the cost of falsifying or faking the condition of political persecution or inventing oneself or fabricating oneself a history of dissidence so as to later reappear or return in a real carnival in an exhibition of opportunism.

I say this in defense of the sacred cause of the fight for liberty for Cuba that is being embodied and discredited by some. I say this in vindication of thousands of true fighters for human rights that suffer persecution in Cuba, jail and even giving their lives generously for the cause. I say this in defense of those that with pain must abandon their country on account of the harassment of their families, for having dedicated themselves with authenticity to the cause of liberty and for other circumstances, as in Cuba many are persecuted and not only the dissidents. The politically persecuted that solicit it should continue to be welcomed as political refugees by the United States and other countries. We remember that many Cubans cannot come to Cuban because the government of Cuba denies them this right. Otherwise, I urge that people not use dangerous paths or those that risk lives to emigrate.

We demand the end to the persecution that ultimately occurs at the societal level, by means of totalitarianism that oppresses all Cubans. For this reason, any Cuban trying to escape or looking for liberty and a new life. It would be cruel to deny them this opportunity. For this reason, the Cubans that are already outside of Cuba or that have arrived in the United States or any other country, should not be deported.

Otherwise, and with respect, we remember those who support or promote the law proposed by Mr. Rivera, some exiled, possibly with the best intentions, supported the designation of the status of politically persecuted to all Cubans that came to other places or claimed that the path of exile was the only legitimate one in the face of the oppression in Cuba.

But we also call attention to the inconsistency of those that drive this falsely harmonious cultural exchange between the ideological and political apartheid and the denial of the rights that exist in Cuba and the inconsistency of those only speak to promote tourism and business

travel as supposed methods of achieving change. This current can turn into an element of 'change-fraud,' which is change without rights, a method that is imposed already in Cuba and from the outside against the right to rights for the Cuban people.

Because of this it is necessary to remember that:

This issue that we are discussing today has originated from, is manipulated and exported, and now and always exploited by the totalitarian regime against its own Cuban people who are the only victims.

To explain further: It is a problem created by the regime that denies freedom and the rights to its citizens and has converted life into a prison. A regime that manipulated the problem like a regulated safety valve, with all of the resources of totalitarianism, the disadvantages of Cubans, the culture of fear and deftly handled and no less cruel, the desire of Cubans to find a new life. A regime that in this way has exported Cuba's drama and which is unfolding in a Cuban exile that longs for his country, maintains its Cuban roots and that heartbreakingly suffers along with Cubans here; the worst punishment that can be imposed on a Cuban is to separate him from his family and his land. Thus the coming together and communication between family members becomes a vital necessity. A regime that ruthlessly exploits this situation and, while continuing to deny the right of free entry and exit to Cubans, imposes on the exiled a tax to see their palm trees and pay a ransom to kiss, hug and help their family and friends within Cuba, those who the regime treats as hostages.

Let's not allow this contradiction to be artificially moved to the heart of the people. Let's reflect and debate these subjects and get to the bottom of these contradictions between government and people: the totalitarian regime denies all Cubans freedom and many others their rights including, the right to freely enter and leave their own country.

God wants us to find the adequate behavior for a just solution and not for erosion that will eventually divert us, divide us and face Cuban against Cuban. Our suggestion is;

A solidarity campaign for the rights of Cubans to freely leave Cuba without restrictions or time limits, without goods and property being confiscated, without being identified or discriminated against, without permission or invitations or letters of release, for the right of all Cubans to freely enter Cuba without being extorted, without time limits, without asking permission and with all the civil rights and with respect for Cuba and all of the rights for all Cubans living within and outside of Cuba.

Let us run this campaign so that the people believe, so that the world believes.

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