



Center for Democracy  
IN THE  
AMERICAS



## **Collective Call of Action, Talking Points, and Analyses on Cuba's Humanitarian Crisis**

### **WOLA Statement**

The U.S. should prioritize measures that will concretely aid the Cuban people. The Cuban government should respect the right of peaceful protest, and refrain from violence and repression.

### **CDA Statement**

CDA Urges the Biden-Harris Administration to Take Actionable Steps to Remove Sanctions Which Impede Its Own Policy Objectives

### **International Organizations Urge President Biden to Prioritize the Humanitarian Situation in Cuba**

An unprecedented coalition of academics, foundations, and civic groups with long records of engagement with Cuba wrote a letter to President Joe Biden, urging him to prioritize the humanitarian situation in Cuba by suspending regulations that inhibit the flow of aid to the island.

### **24 Organizations and Faith Groups Call for Humanitarian Action in Cuba**

24 churches and faith-based organizations signed on to a letter calling on the administration of President Joe Biden to lift the sanctions on Cuba, saying they prevent humanitarian aid from reaching people on the island.

**For Families, Sending Money Home to Cuba Shouldn't be a Political Football**, Ada Ferrer, *The Hill*

Professor Ada Ferrer, a Cuban American Historian and a professor at New York University, emphasizes the importance of lifting caps on remittances from the U.S. to Cuba. Professor

Ferrer notes that the decision to send remittances to the island should be vested on Cuban Americans, rather than U.S. policymakers. According to Professor Ferrer, while “facilitating remittances will not solve Cubans’ problems with their own government or its system,” the allowance of remittances greatly eases the current struggles faced by Cubans attempting to afford daily necessities as the island endures one of its worst economic crises.

**Biden shouldn’t let right wing Cuban-Americans drown out Cuban voices**, Jean Guerrero, *LA Times*

Jean Guerrero, opinion columnist at the Los Angeles Times, urges President Biden to not let Cuban American elites dictate his policy towards Cubans, observing that *the voices of comfortable Cuban Americans who oppose remittances because they loathe Cuba’s Communist leaders should not drown out the cries for food and medicines from Cubans.*

**Cuba Study Group Statement on the July 30 Meeting between President Biden and Cuban American Leaders**, *Cuba Study Group*

In this [press release](#), Ricardo Herrero, the executive director of the Cuba Study Group, applauds the Biden-Harris administration’s response to the ongoing struggles faced by Cubans on the island and asks the Administration to continue to respond with a sense of urgency. The statement comes after Mr. Herrero was among eleven Cuban American leaders that attended a White House meeting hosted by President Joe Biden on July 30. In noting the ongoing efforts made by the Biden-Harris administration, Mr. Herrero urges the Administration to foster positive levels of engagement between the U.S. and Cuba. The executive director notes, “Ultimately, the best way to ‘stand with the Cuban people’ is for Americans and Cuban Americans to be present on the ground in Cuba.” Mr. Herrero also stresses the importance of re-establishing the flow of remittances, allowing U.S.-based firms to provide cloud-based services such as online payment processing as well as subscription-based platforms, and restaffing the U.S. Embassy in Havana.

## **Editorials & Articles:**

**Biden’s Cuba Policy is Stuck on Trump’s Autopilot**, Geoff Thale, *Responsible Statecraft*

WOLA’s president Geoff Thale, founder of the Cuba program, outlines how the Biden administration continues Trump era practices that deepen and exacerbate the harm imposed on Cuban people, despite multiple campaign promises to overturn these policies. Moreover, Thale sheds light on the erosion of possible U.S.-Cuba cooperation the longer these practices stay in place by breeding further distrust between both governments. By analyzing the multiple factors at play, including the powerful force of domestic politics and their influence on Cuba policy, Thale paints a compelling picture of how the Biden administration can move beyond an impasse and make meaningful policy changes.

**Biden Stalls on Reinstating Cuban Remittances for No Good Reason**, William M. LeoGrande, *Responsible Statecraft*

In this [article](#), Professor William M. LeoGrande explains the lack of control Cuba's government exercises over the flow of remittances. Specifically, Professor LeoGrande notes that Cuba's government does not receive direct economic benefits from remittances, only collecting a ten percent tax on U.S. dollars sent to the island in cash form. Additionally, Professor LeoGrande explains how Cubans are able to spend U.S. dollars, despite recent changes and restrictions to foreign currencies and foreign currency stores. The Professor explains that there is currently no obligation for Cubans to exchange foreign currencies into the Cuban convertible pesos, or CUC, thereby allowing Cubans to directly spend the U.S. dollar at stores that specifically cater to foreign currencies. This leads to lower markup prices on items in foreign currency stores than in stores selling goods in the island's national currency.

**Why Biden Should Ease Burdens on Humanitarian Aid to Cuba**, Jorge Quintana, *Responsible Statecraft*

In this [opinion piece](#), CDA's executive director Jorge Quintana, urges the Biden-Harris administration to prioritize humanitarian aid to Cuba and remove the plentiful limitations on humanitarian aid currently upheld by U.S. policy. Specifically, Mr. Quintana highlights that while the Administration has stated there are allowances for humanitarian aid under the framework of the embargo, in practice, there are immense and onerous limitations and policies that frequently thwart any attempt to deliver aid to Cuba. In response, Mr. Quintana argues that the Administration should remove restrictions on aid and remittances, and work to find a middle ground between actively supporting the Cuban people and holding Cuba's government accountable. Additionally, Mr. Quintana notes that there is currently a discrepancy between the Biden-Harris administration's Cuba policy, which upholds punitive sanctions and restrictions, and the Administration's recent statements on Cuba, which note a desire to support the freedom of the Cuban people. He states, "We cannot simultaneously stand with them and subject them to draconian conditions of isolation and hunger."

Perspectives from Havana: What do people in Cuba think of the events of July 11th and the current situation in Cuba? Some [views](#) and some actions.

**Editorial: The Cuban People Need Help**, *El Toque* (Spanish)

In this editorial by *El Toque* staff, the writers explain that Cuba needs help to combat the current COVID-19 crisis. The article argues that the U.S. should put aside ideologies, politics, and criticisms lodged at Cuba's government and do what it can to provide assistance. "America has the best and greatest opportunity to help us," the article states. "Because of its proximity, because of its logistical capacity, because it is home to millions of brothers and sisters who think and feel for their country of origin and their families." It notes that "Yes, it can be a bitter pill to deal with the same government that violently repressed the July 11 protests, but moral high ground is on the side of those who put human lives ahead of a historic dispute." It goes on to urge the U.S. Administration to consider the Treasury Department's recent measures "to make more flexible access to critical resources in the containment of the pandemic by sanctioned countries" and argues that "Cuba should not be the exception."

## Talking points:

### Humanitarian aid

The Administration should remove tedious reporting requirements and bureaucratic processes to facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid. In particular, the Administration should:

- Remove the specific licenses required to send medical supplies to Cuba such as testing kits and respiratory devices to Cuba and remove end-use verification for humanitarian imports, thereby decreasing the often deterrent red tape in sending aid to Cuba from the U.S. and empowering donors and sellers to act,
- Lift restrictions on the percentage of U.S.-made material used in foreign produced medical supplies and lift all restrictions on banking and financial transactions related to humanitarian aid, thereby removing removing fear of encountering repercussions and increasing the flow of aid from U.S. entities, churches, NGOs, and international individuals and companies,
- Fast track humanitarian licenses and medical supplies, or offer short-term general licenses for those categories of sales or donations, thereby mobilizing aid efforts and making humanitarian licensing a clearer, quicker, more accessible, and more navigable process for those interested in providing relief to the Cuban people.

### Remittances

The Biden Administration should quickly lift all restrictions and caps on family and donative remittances. Cutting off U.S. remittances, which represent many Cubans' only lifeline for the purchase of food and other basic necessities, deepens the humanitarian emergency in Cuba in the midst of a pandemic and the worst economic crisis since the depression of the 1990s.

- Remittances are critical to alleviate the food crisis. 77% of Cuban households' consumption is funded by remittances.
- Remittances are a vital support for millions of Cubans, especially the elderly and other vulnerable citizens.
- Remittances play an important role as seed capital for small businesses; entrepreneurs use remittances to buy inputs, invest, and boost private businesses, generating employment and income.
- Remittances empower the Cuban people by guaranteeing citizens greater economic freedom and encouraging positive economic changes in Cuba.
- The restrictions make Cubans, Cuban-Americans, and their families a collateral damage of U.S. internal politics.
- The U.S. does not restrict remittances to most of the countries targeted by U.S. sanctions.

### Travel

The Administration should remove restrictions on private and commercial travel, while attending to the necessary health and safety precautions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Allowing travel and exchange to Cuba is essential to promoting interests of both the U.S. and the Cuban people, including but not limited to:

- Supporting cultural exchange and collaboration amongst the people of the U.S. and the Cuban people, thereby allowing an incredibly robust and dynamic form of diplomacy to take place,

- Allowing Cuban Americans in visiting and supporting their family across the island,
- Increasing the amount and distribution of money and goods sent to Cuba, particularly during a time of immense economic and humanitarian crisis,
- Expanding the economic benefits of tourism for everyday Cubans, particularly Cubans outside of Havana, and the Cuban private sector,
- Increasing the flow of necessary humanitarian supplies to Cuba,
- Upholding the constitutional right of U.S. citizens to travel internationally.

### **US Embassy staffing**

The Biden-Harris administration should re-staff the embassy with the necessary measures to ensure the safety of U.S. personnel resume consular services at the U.S. Embassy in Cuba, including visa processing and the Cuban Family Reunification Program. A fully functional embassy is essential to pursuing U.S. interests in the relationship with Cuba, including but not limited to:

- Monitoring human rights and other developments on the ground, as well as initiating a human rights dialogue with Cuba's government and advocating against arbitrary detentions, which has been a central policy point of all U.S. administration including that of the Biden-Harris administration,
- Meeting the U.S.'s 1994/1995 migration accords commitment to issue 20,000 visas annually to Cuban nationals, thereby upholding a longstanding migration agreement, providing a safe and regulated migration pathway for Cubans, and supporting U.S. national security interests,
- Supporting U.S. national security interests by taking steps to shrinking irregular migration which increased from [49](#) Cuban migrants in fiscal year 2020 to over [600](#) Cuban migrants thus far in the current fiscal year,
- Engaging with and providing critical support to Cuban civil society on the island on a regular basis and in a transparent manner, thereby playing an actively supportive role in allowing the necessary conditions for Cuban Civil Society to play their independent and critical role in determining Cuba's future.
- Resuming the Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program (CFRP), thereby allowing eligible U.S. citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents to apply for parole for Cuban family members, allowing them to travel to the U.S. while they wait for an immigrant visa.