

Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounces acts of hostility against Cuba's baseball team

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STATEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On March 19, 2023, during the semifinal game of the V World Baseball Classic between the teams Cuba and the United States, held at LoanDepot Park Stadium in the city of Miami, Florida, there were regrettable and dangerous incidents against the Cuban team participating in the competition, which Cuba

strongly denounces.

It was a difficult game. The Cuban team went there to defend its colors with dignity, after having reached the semifinal stage by merits earned on the field. They faced a team recognized for its technical superiority and which was clearly the winner. The conduct of the U.S. team and its management were respectful and in accordance with the sportsmanship that should prevail in these events. Their victory was well deserved.

But the Cuban team also had to face there a vile and organized aggressiveness, which contrasted with the many messages of support, recognition and solidarity received from many people in the United States, mostly Cubans or descendants of Cubans, a good part of them from the city of Miami itself.

With the clear purpose of destabilizing our players, repeated acts of various kinds were carried out against them, against the delegation that accompanied them and against the supporters of the Cuban team in the stadium. These included direct aggressions, threats, use of offensive and vulgar language, attacks detrimental to the morale of the Cuban team and other incidents aimed at undermining the spirit of the athletes and damaging the spectacle. These events were contrary to the conception of this type of sporting event.

The rules of order and conduct established by the stadium were not enforced, with the apparent complicity of certain representatives and personnel of that sports facility and of local authorities, particularly those in charge of order and security.

Objects were thrown at the players and their families, including women, children and elderly people, as well as at members of the delegation and representatives of the Cuban press, and also at spectators supporting the Cuban team. Alleged spectators entered the field three times during the match and interrupted the game, endangering the safety and stability of the Cuban team's players. Repeated offenses and threats were hurled at the athletes, in loud voices, when it was their turn to bat or when they were preparing to enter the game, as happened to Cuban pitcher Frank Abel Álvarez while he was warming up in the bullpen, which goes against the rules of Major League Baseball (MLB) and any notion of clean sport. Signs were constantly displayed with political slogans, obscene and vulgar language, disrespectful to athletes and the general public, which interfered with the enjoyment of the game.

Likewise, clothing with offensive phrases and images of political content, not allowed by the rules of the sports facility, were used.

Likewise, the Code of Conduct for Guests established for the stadium was repeatedly violated, based on the irresponsible consumption of alcoholic beverages and the violation of assigned seats.

On most occasions when representatives of the Cuban delegation or Major League Baseball went to police officers to denounce the transgressions described above, they did not act on the transgressors.

All these actions were sufficient cause for immediate expulsion, citation, arrest or other legal consequences, which on this occasion did not occur. These facts denaturalized an event of deep cultural roots for both countries.

The Ministry denounces the complicity demonstrated by the local authorities, who allowed and created the conditions for these acts to take place, openly and with impunity. At the same time, it strongly denounces the incitement by local politicians and figures holding public office to indiscipline, aggression and harassment of the athletes. The tolerance of the forces of law and order, in violation of their duties, stimulated the commission of successive aggressions.

These same sectors were the ones that in 2018 sabotaged the agreement between the Cuban Baseball Federation and Major League Baseball, which would have been beneficial for all parties involved and would have contributed to put an end to the discriminatory treatment to which Cuban athletes are

subjected.

The Government of Cuba alerted the Government of the United States in good time, through diplomatic channels, about the public and open threats designed to tarnish the participation of the Cuban team in the segment of the championship to be held in the city of Miami and about the corrupt and irresponsible trajectory of the authorities of that city.

Team Cuba did not participate in the event under equal conditions. Long before the start of the championship, the Cuban team had to face a complex and discriminatory process in which Major League Baseball authorities had to request and receive, with delay, the authorization of licenses from the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Treasury Department. This process included a special permit for Cuba to participate in the event, a later permit for the incorporation of Cuban players from the Major League Baseball circuit and an even later permit for their early integration with the rest of the team. The permits granted explicitly prohibited several of the team members from traveling to Cuba with their teammates at the end of the tournament. All this jeopardized Cuba's participation in the Baseball Classic and implied extraordinary disadvantages.

Cuban athletes have participated in sporting events in multiple cities in the United States and other countries without facing this climate of aggressiveness that seems unique to the city of Miami. Cuba will not give up the right to compete on equal terms on U.S. soil. In contrast, Cuba will continue to honor its commitments as host in all international competitions held in our country, where athletes from all over the world, including those from the United States, have always been respected and enthusiastically welcomed.

Facts such as those denounced above ratify, once again, that the city of Miami does not meet the minimum conditions to host an international event and that its authorities have a fundamental responsibility in this despicable reality.

Cuba thanks the numerous fans and all those inside and outside the stadium in Miami who welcomed with joy and sportsmanship Cuba's participation in the Classic and its qualification for the semifinals with a team of Cubans living in Cuba and abroad. Many approached the team to offer their support and solidarity.

The people of Cuba lived days of emotion following the team since the first games and also suffered as their own the harassment by extremist sectors that attacked the team and were furious with those who made real, in Team Asere, the dream of a Cuban team with the participation of Cuban players from the Major Leagues and leagues from other countries. Cuba will remain open to reedit this experience.

Above hatred, love for Cuba and love for sports will always prevail.

Havana, March 22, 2023.

(Taken from Cubaminrex)

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