

# *Cuba: A thorny path for drug traffickers*

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By Roberto Morejón

The imposition of harsh prison sentences on foreign and national citizens for drug trafficking was striking in Cuba, as such cases are rare.

A court in the east of the country handed down the sentence in relation to 15 defendants, sentenced for the crimes of international drug trafficking, assault, illegal possession and carrying of weapons, among other charges.

Worse still, the court heard of the serious offence of intending to establish a logistical support base for further landings of narcotics.

Those involved, who were seized with abundant resources, faced the weight of a severe criminal law policy for such offences that includes penalties ranging from 4 to 30 years imprisonment, life imprisonment or death.

The combined and timely action of forces from various institutions, led by the Ministry of the Interior, underlined the government's determination to confront drug trafficking and consumption, despite the difficult economic situation of the archipelago, essentially due to the US blockade.

The courts of the largest of the Antilles punished almost 700 people linked to drug trafficking between January and November 2023.

In that period, more than 1,200 Cubans and 13 foreigners were prosecuted for drug trafficking offences.

Strict vigilance is exercised at the General Customs of the Republic to prevent travellers from smuggling drugs.

The competent bodies are also on the alert to protect citizens, especially young people, from drug use.

At the end of last year, parliamentary committees analysed the problem and recommended new measures to prevent addiction.

As a result of incisive monitoring, 77 marijuana cultivations were detected in the Caribbean nation, as well as 94 inter-provincial trafficking operations in which 52 kilograms of drugs were seized during the first 11 months of last year.

The zero-tolerance policy on trafficking in harmful substances is being applied here and the country is therefore complying with the relevant legal instruments adopted by the UN.

This should serve as a warning to drug traffickers, as they will not lay down their arms, even in the face of an increase in the number of drug shipments entering the country by sea, a more dangerous way of supplying the domestic market.

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