

# *Church World Service Urges U.S. Release of Cuban 5 Detainees*

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Washington, Nov 1, (RHC), – Church World Service (CWS) President and CEO, Rev. John L. McCullough, recently defended the cause of the three Cuban anti-terrorist fighters, known as the Cuban Five, who remain unjustly imprisoned in the United States since 1998.

Recently returned from a visit to Antonio Guerrero, one of three Cubans held in American prisons, Rev. McCullough reflected on the intersection of faith and politics as he prepares to travel to Cuba for visits with church leaders, Cuban government officials and the families of the imprisoned men.

Guerrero is one of five men—the Cuban 5—arrested in 1998 in Florida and subsequently convicted and sentenced in procedures that have been widely criticized as unjust on espionage conspiracy charges. Visits with the two remaining Cuban 5 detainees, Ramon Labañino and Gerardo Hernandez, will be rescheduled.

McCullough emphasized that there is a faith imperative that drove him to this mission. “It means responding to the mandate of faith that speaks to the importance of justice and speaks to the reality of people who are held in bondage and the importance of setting free those who are unfairly imprisoned,” he said.

The Church World Service head also spoke against the US economic blockade on the island, saying that “policies that relegate people to conditions of hunger and poverty are wrong.”

McCullough and the faith delegation scheduled to visit Cuba next week also are urging the release of Alan Gross, the former U.S. Agency for International Development subcontractor, who has been imprisoned in Cuba for nearly five years, under charges of inciting subversion and introducing illegal IT equipment.

“CWS is calling for the humanitarian release of Mr. Gross by the Cuban government and of the remaining Cuban 5 prisoners by the U.S. government,” said McCullough. “This is a humanitarian imperative and an important step toward improving the relationship between our two countries.”

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