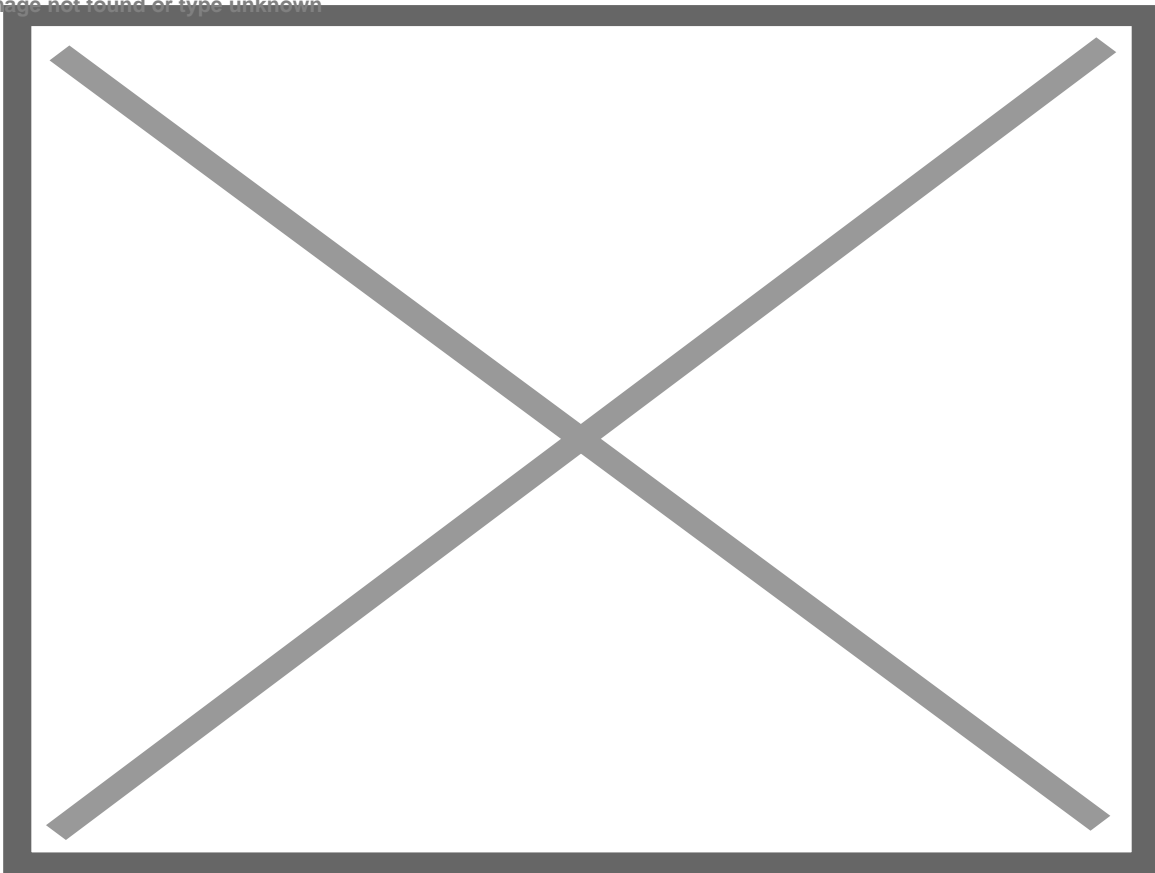


Calls in the United States for an end to the blockade against Cuba

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Cuban diplomats David Ramírez and Yasser Ibarra highlighted the suffering caused by this cruel interventionist policy, explaining how former President Donald Trump added 243 measures during his first term that were not reversed by Joe Biden. These measures have continued to increase in Biden's second term.

By: Nuria Barbosa León

At the Union Hall of the International Association of Machinists in Los Angeles, California, the commitment to continuing the fight against the criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba was reaffirmed.

Cuban diplomats David Ramírez and Yasser Ibarra highlighted the suffering caused by this cruel interventionist policy, explaining how former President Donald Trump added 243 measures during his first term that were not reversed by Joe Biden. These measures have continued to increase in Biden's second term.

They also explained that Cuba was placed on the spurious list of state sponsors of terrorism just days before Trump left the White House in 2021, in an attempt to intensify coercive measures. Biden later removed Cuba from the list shortly before leaving office, only for the current administration to reinstate it within its first few days — without providing any evidence to justify the designation.

The only reasonable explanation for such actions is to inflict further hardship on the Cuban people, who are currently experiencing a severe economic crisis marked by prolonged power outages, shortages of food and medicine, fuel scarcity and an almost non-existent public transport system — all consequences of the blockade.

'We resumed diplomatic relations during the Obama administration, which saw several sanctions being lifted. Within a very short time, improvements in our country could be seen by the Cuban people and people around the world. For the first time in decades, our GDP grew by 3.6%, rather than the usual annual growth of 1%. You could visit Havana and see thriving businesses and bustling streets, as well as U.S. cruise ships arriving. It was a very dynamic city. 'All of this is based on facts. I am not trying to boost propaganda or anything like that,' explained David Ramírez, according to Mark Friedman, a member of the International Association of Machinists Local 1484 and an activist with the 'Cuba in Los Angeles' committee.

However, Yasser Ibarra emphasised that 'amid this adversity, we have never been alone. You, our friends in solidarity, have organised campaigns, demonstrations and public actions to demand an end to the blockade. You have collected medicines, medical supplies and food, and delivered them to our people.'

He also expressed gratitude for these gestures, as well as for the times when those present had risked their lives by travelling to Cuba and defying prohibitions designed to prevent people-to-people exchanges. 'Every act of solidarity — a donation, a letter, a march or a visit to Cuba — is an act of love that Cuba deeply values. It gives us strength to resist, inspires us to keep fighting, and reminds us that solidarity is the noblest language', he affirmed.

During the event, participants shared experiences from the delegation that attended May Day celebrations in Cuba and expressed their desire to return for similar events.

The Los Angeles branch of the Hands Off Cuba Committee reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to demand the removal of Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, the lifting of all travel and trade restrictions imposed by U.S. blockade laws, and an end to the occupation of Guantánamo, where an illegal military base exists.

Kevin Kucera, a board member of the California Machinists Union, Mike Vera, a representative of the Inland Boatmen's Union and the maritime division of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and Jensen Walsh, co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America in Orange County, endorsed this stance.

Additionally, Jenny Álvarez, a former Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science student, proposed forming another delegation to visit Cuban healthcare institutions, as has been done in the past.

Erika Feresten supported this idea, sharing her experiences of visiting Havana's Calixto García Hospital. "On our website, we published our first initiative, titled 'From the Heart to Cuba'. We have three initiatives: sending pacemakers to Cuba, ending the blockade and defending Cuban medical brigades, which are also under attack. Tonight, we are here to discuss the pacemaker campaign. It is imperative that we mobilise and face this challenge. I am pleased to announce that Health Care 4 Us donated \$500. Their fundraising campaign raised an additional \$750, bringing the total to \$1,250," she stated.

Other speakers proposed additional actions to challenge blockade laws and strengthen the bond between the two peoples, despite the negative policies promoted by the US government to exert control over Cuba.

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