

Método Cuba:

Independent Artists' Testimonies of Forced Exile

Context

Since 2018, the Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), PEN International, and Cubalex have observed a resurgence of the Cuban independent artistic community and acts of creative defiance and protest on the island. In the face of escalating persecution from the Cuban state, our report compiles 17 testimonies of independent exiled Cuban artists and cultural professionals confronted with an unthinkable choice: endure unrelenting attacks by the state or leave their homeland.

Key Findings

- Sixteen artists interviewed alleged they were either arbitrarily detained, subjected to police or judicial interrogations, or placed under house arrest. These artists also alleged that during detention or interrogation, they were threatened with arbitrary or rights-violative punishments, that may include acts of physical or psychological abuse, due to their work or activism. These threats included long prison sentences, expulsion from work, and eviction of the artists or their families from their homes.
- Fifteen artists mentioned receiving explicit threats from authorities of fines, imprisonment, and professional dismissal directed at friends, colleagues, and relatives.
- All artists reported suffering some form of surveillance in the physical or digital spheres. Mentions of physical surveillance included police patrols and State Security agents stationed in front of their homes, being followed in public spaces, or via surveillance cameras. Meanwhile, digital surveillance included the hacking or tapping of phone lines, messaging services, and other means of communication.
- Twelve of the artists we interviewed alleged that they have been victims of state-led harassment campaigns, enduring threats, leaks of their private conversations, and online attacks to delegitimize or badger them.
- All artists shared experiences of censorship, including the confiscation of tools or works of art; prohibition from exhibiting in galleries or official institutions and from holding meetings between artists; the inability to publish or collaborate with state institutions or organizations affiliated with the government; the exclusion of specific works from exhibitions; and the blocking of online content.
- Once in exile, of the 17 artists interviewed, 14 explicitly mentioned experiences of isolation or difficulties associated with integrating into a new society. Artist-specific needs may include mobility, public financing, networking assistance, translation and language support, and access to tools, spaces, and cultural institutions.



Key Recommendations

To the Cuban Government

- Immediately release all imprisoned artists and political prisoners who are jailed for peacefully expressing their ideas and creative work.
- Respect the right of return for artists and remove all restrictions currently placed on artists in exile who wish to go back to Cuba as their country of origin, ensuring their free expression and the full exercise of their human rights.
- Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

To the Governments of Latin America and the International Human Rights Community

- Recognize and denounce human rights violations in Cuba in interactions with regional and international forums.
- Investigate allegations of the systematic abuse of human rights against artists, writers, and activists in Cuba as it relates to restrictions on freedom of artistic expression, arbitrary detentions, and patterns of forced exile.

To International Civil Society, Cultural Organizations, and the Media

- Invest in creating local, regional, and international platforms and coalitions that build solidarity with Cuban artists, amplify their voices, and further expose violations of freedom of expression in Cuba.

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Read the Report



** The report is available in both English and Spanish by scanning the QR code or by visiting artistsatriskconnection.org*

