



EYE on CUBA

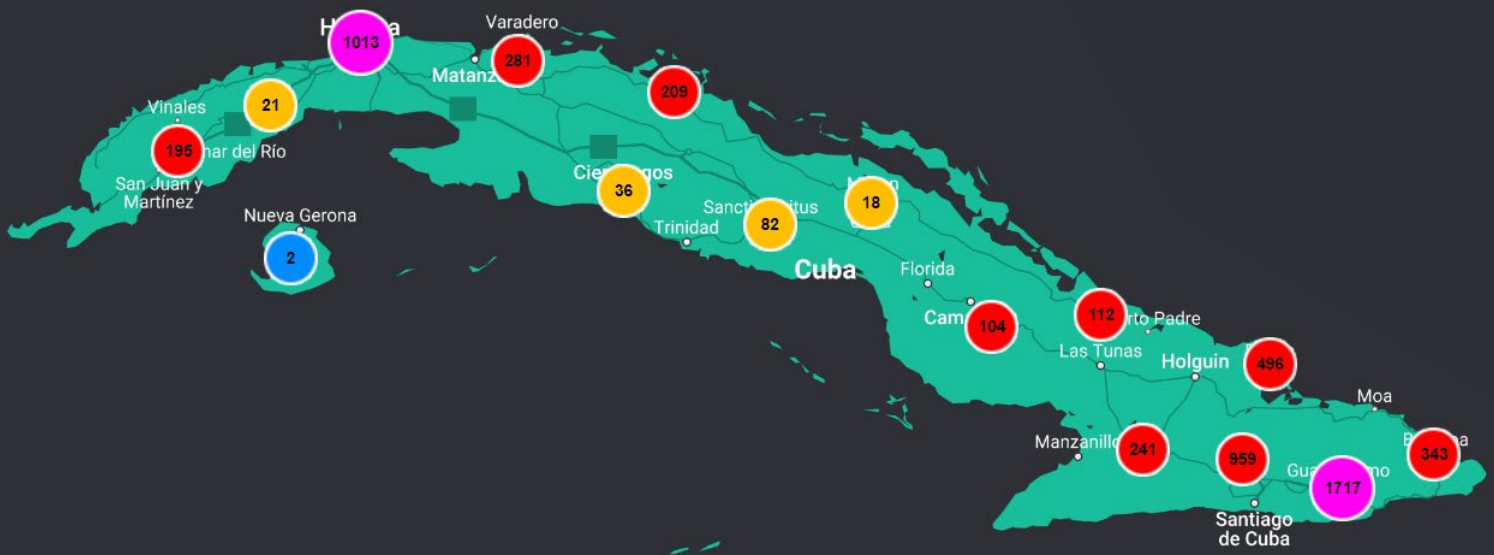
Monitoring Human Rights Abuses in Cuba

Violation of Human Rights in Cuba

Annual Report 2023

The cases shown do not allow us to know first-hand the reality of Cuban civil society, which often faces repression from the authorities.

www.eyeoncuba.org





Introduction

People in Need is a non-governmental organisation from the Czech Republic, whose origin goes back to 1992, when it was founded under the principles of freedom, humanism, equity and solidarity. Since then, its work has focused on offering humanitarian aid and keeping an ongoing struggle against the violation of human rights that people undergo throughout the world. This refers specifically to those rights that are protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1997, as a result of the authoritarian regime being experienced in Cuba, PIN started operations to help the population residing in that island. Since then and up to now, the Cuban program *Eye on Cuba* has focused on promoting and protecting human rights in that country. One of the working areas that PIN Latam has developed is support to civil society, a project that offers help to various projects and activities implemented by local organisations, which encounter difficulties for accessing international help because they cannot be registered as legal entities.

As far as the defence and support of human rights, *Eye on Cuba* has taken care of documenting and promoting these rights throughout the years, as they are constantly violated in the Island. Similarly, it offers aid to those activists and citizens that are arbitrarily arrested and submitted to various types of violence as a result of their decision to lift up their voices in the face of the harsh reality they live in. Once the cases reported thanks to the help of Eye on Cuba's collaborators are systematised, they are published on the website in order to make them visible and raise awareness in the world about the repression and violence that Cubans experience.

The intent of this data base is not to collect all the violations that take place on the Island, but to document a sample of well-documented, verified cases that make up a sufficiently broad representation. This sample makes it possible to study the cases, their characteristics, evolution and resemblances, as well as to record the identity of perpetrators that could potentially be used for the purposes of future accountability.

Every year, the *Eye on Cuba* team makes sure to make known, through an annual report, the violation of human rights of both civil people and activists. Thus, the present document has been developed in order to statistically project the information drawn from the cases obtained for the year 2023. In this report you will be able to observe the total of events that took place during the year, as well as percentages that indicates who the victims were, the type of violence they were subjected to, the provinces where these cases occurred, and the rights that were most affected—both civil and political as well as social, economic and cultural.

Contexto actual

Since 2020, Cuba has been undergoing a multi-dimensional crisis that impacts all the aspects of the lives of its citizens.¹ From governmental repression and the financial crisis to the lack of basic services, the country is living through one of the most difficult stages of its recent history.²

This crisis deepened during 2023, increasing the likelihood of significant social outbreaks.³ Parallel to this, governmental repression continued against any form of dissent and public criticism, while citizens were facing a serious financial crisis that impacted their basic needs.

The financial crisis is aggravated by a centralised economy, with a high percentage of state enterprises that show loss and decreasing production. The economy is currently in an alarming state of deterioration, which is now known as Cuba's "Haitianisation", which designates the country's alarming deterioration that has brought it to a condition similar to Haiti, even though the two countries have different histories and conditions. This term illustrates how different political systems can lead to similar outcomes of backwardness. The dependence on fuel imports and the lack of investment in renewable energy have proven insufficient and poorly planned. (Pantoja & Pantoja, 2024)

¹ Muñoz, Rosa. *Cuba y sus múltiples crisis*. (Cuba and Its Multiple Crises). DW Español. November, 2023.

² Morris, Emily. *Economic Crisis in Cuba: government missteps and tightening US sanctions are to blame*. The Conversation, January 2024

³ Lazcano, Wendy. *"Un estallido social es inminente": las perspectivas de 2024 en Cuba*. ("An Imminent Social Outbreak": The perspectives for 2024 in Cuba). Diario de Cuba, January, 2024.

Cuba's energy crisis has worsened due to decades of neglect in the maintenance and modernisation of the electrical infrastructure. To this is added the dependence on fuel imports, while investment in renewable energy has been insufficient and poorly planned, representing a mere 5.26% of the installed capacity. (Morales & Morales, 2024)

The government has announced unpopular economic measures, such as increases in fuel and electricity prices, which will not solve the crisis but only make inflation worse. The current economic model does not attract the necessary foreign investment for modernising the energy infrastructure, due to the absence of a national market able to ensure returns to investors.

An unmistakable symptom of the deep crisis the Island is going through is the migratory exodus of Cubans. The economic crisis, the lack of opportunities, the criminalisation of dissent and the lack of freedom of speech have been key factors of the worst migratory crisis in its history⁴. (Blanco & Blanco, 2024)

The situation in Cuba is extremely critical and multi-dimensional, involving financial, energy, health, educational and migratory issues. There is an evident need for an all-encompassing reform in order to stabilise and improve the living conditions of Cuban citizens. The international community must continue to exert pressure so that human rights are respected and a transition to a more democratic, efficient system is fostered.

⁴ Toro, Mariana. *Una peligrosa travesía y el dolor del desarraigo: así es el nuevo éxodo cubano*. (A dangerous journey and the sorrow of rootlessness: This is what the new Cuban exodus is like). National Geographic, August, 2023.

Methodology and Data Analysis

a. The Eye on Cuba Platform

The Eye on Cuba network gathers data on the basis of information provided by collaborators, who identify, document and report State actions that curtail the exercise of fundamental rights according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The present report is based on the analysis of the cases gathered during the year 2023, which includes a total of 145 cases.

b. Typology of Violations During 2023

A total of 145 cases were reported in 2023, spread throughout the whole Cuban territory, of which 5.7% (16) were actions addressed at limiting the exercise of religious freedom. Likewise, 31% of these violations include deprivation of freedom against the victims.

As far as the victims are concerned, 31% (45) of the violations were carried out against men, while 69% had women as their victims. Of the total number of victims, 94% are activists, while only 1 person did not consider himself/herself as such. Both characteristics are related to the fact that the activist group Ladies in White is made up of women.



The *Eye on Cuba* network emerged with the purpose of documenting and reporting violations of human rights in Cuba. These rights are protected in the international framework of Human Rights, especially in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

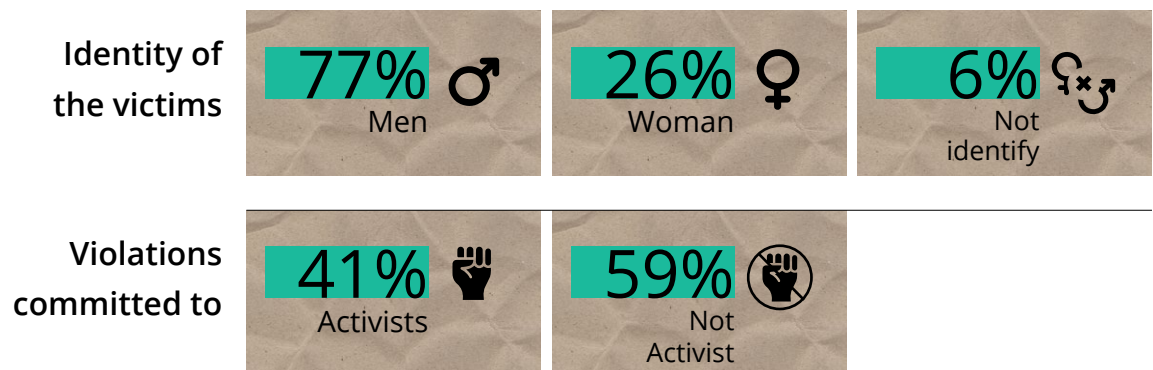
Between 2013 and 2023, the Eye on Cuba network has recorded a total 7397 cases of infringement of the human rights of the Cuban people. The year 2014 showed the highest figure, with a total 1254 cases reported. In contrast, the year 2023 has shown the lowest recorded figure of reports made by activists and non-activists, for a total 145 cases.

This decrease in the cases reported can be explained, in part, by the migratory exodus the Island is going through, as this flow has included several members of our network of collaborators. For this reason, enormous efforts were made during 2022 and 2023 in order to train new members, who also had to go through a learning curve that reflected on the number of cases reported.

To this situation, one must also add the difficulties for Internet access, the lack of electrical power, as well as other first-need situations that require attention and that make it difficult for the activists to devote themselves to the documentation of human rights violations.

Throughout the year 2023, Eye on Cuba was able to record, thanks to its collaborators network, 145 cases of human rights violations throughout the whole territory of Cuba. Upon analysing this figure, it became clear that 77% of the cases had been committed against people who identified as men, 26% against women, and the remaining 6% against people who did not identify their gender.

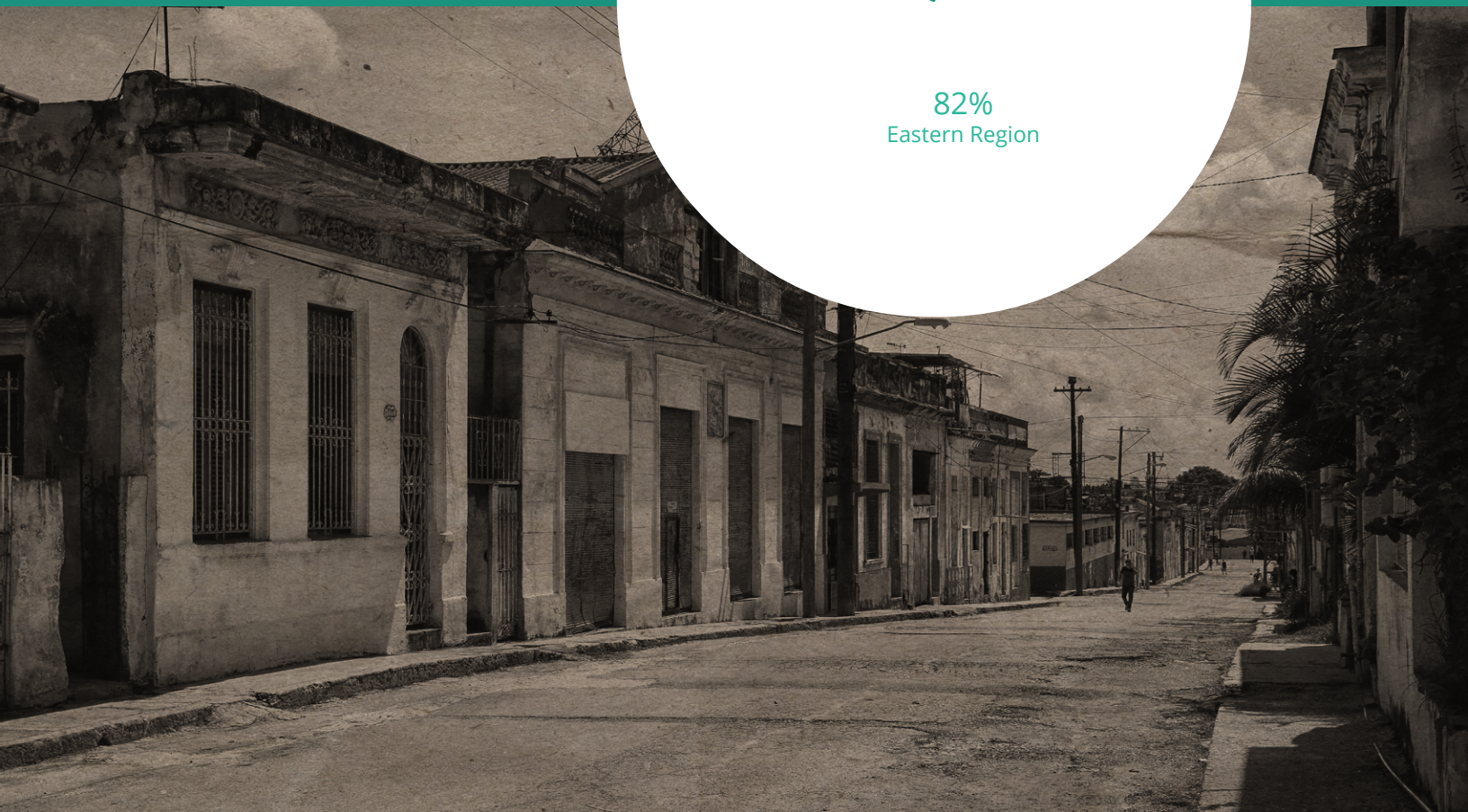
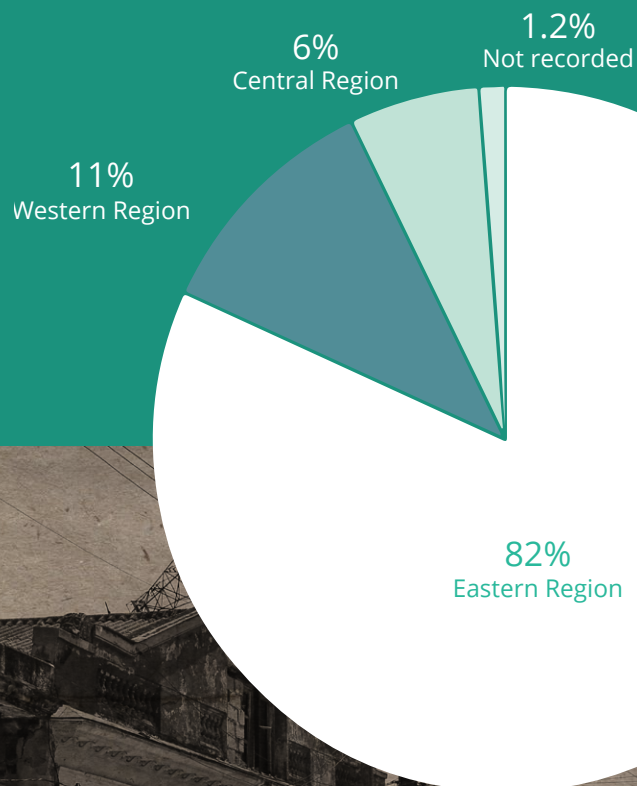
Another important fact is that in more than half of the cases, 41% of the total, the violations were committed against activists, thus confirming a reduction of civic space in the Cuban civil society.



Confirming a reduction of civic space in the Cuban civil society.

Cases collected in the three large regions of the island.

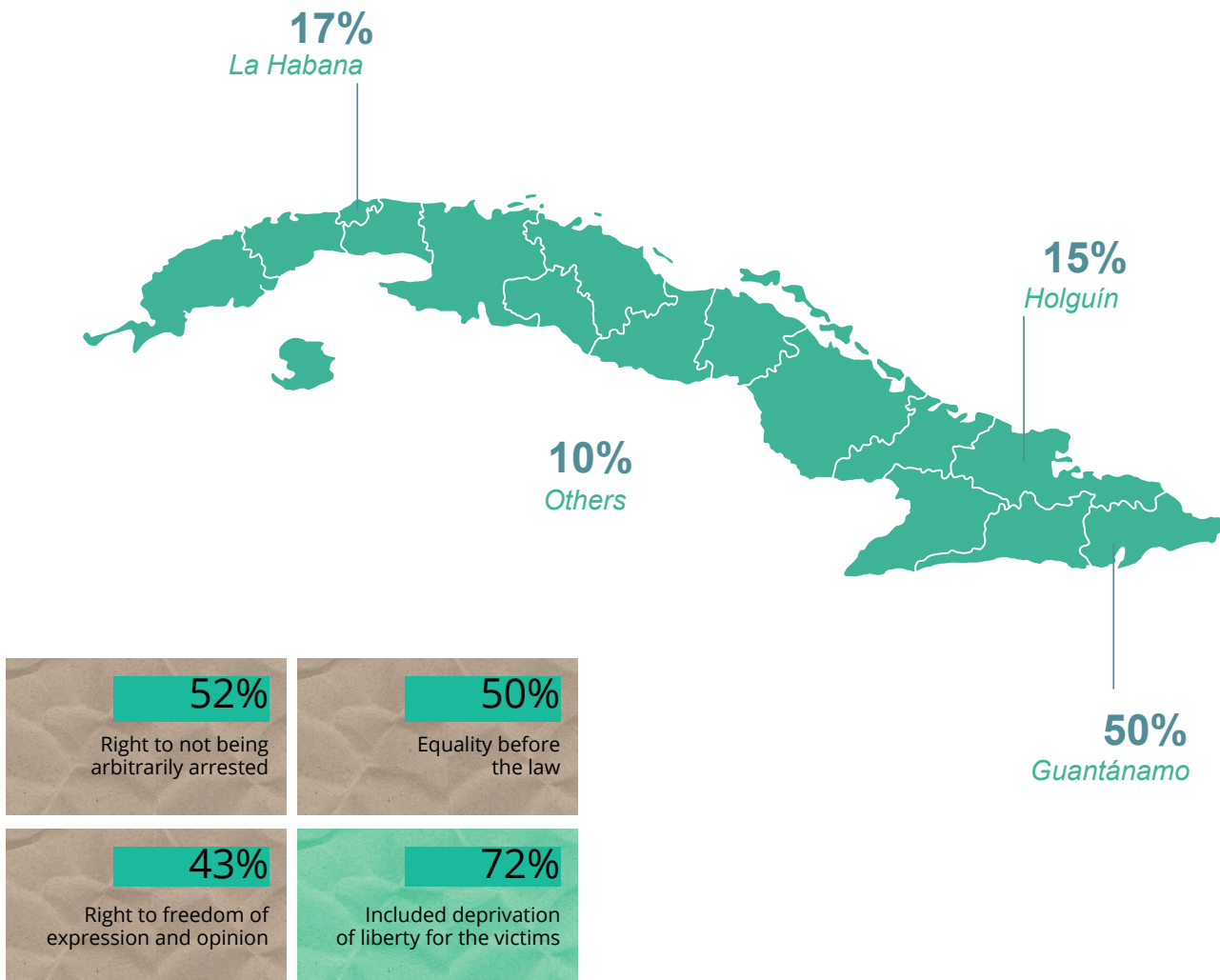
The reports involve events that took place in 9 different provinces. When these were examined on a regional basis, it was determined that the Eastern Region includes the majority of the cases, with 82%. Next comes the Western Region with 11% of the cases, and then the Central Region with 6%. However, for 1.2% of the cases, the area where the events took place was not recorded.



Distribution per region

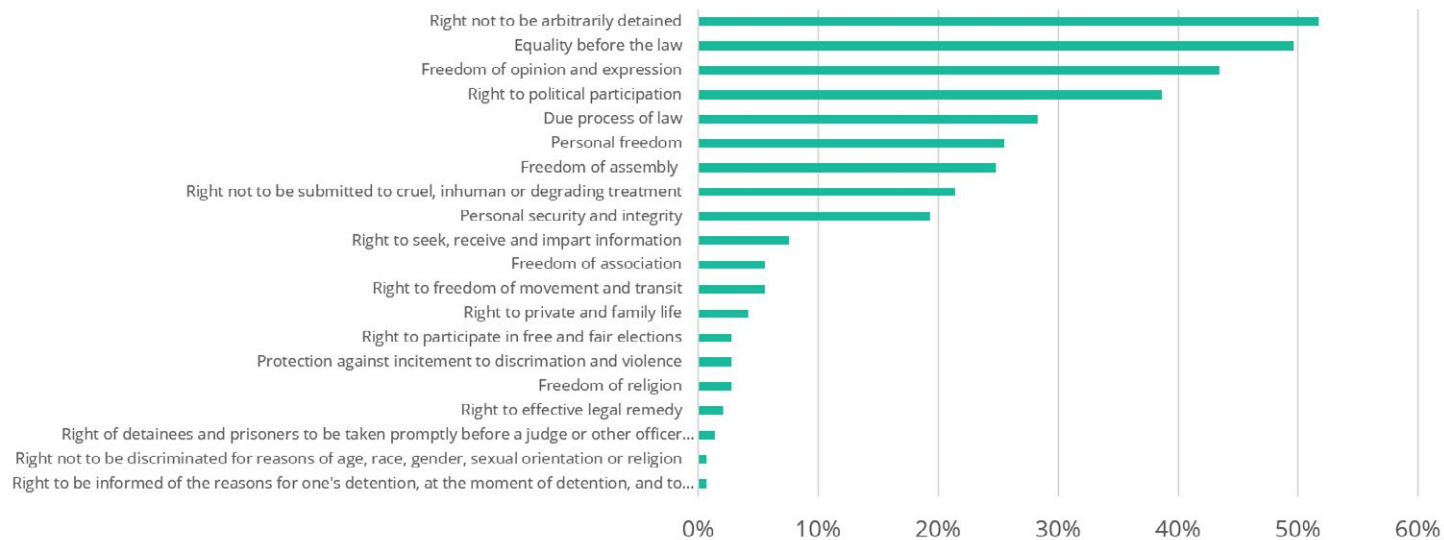
Similarly, Eye on Cuba carried out a per-province grouping of the cases reported. This grouping made it possible to assert that Guantánamo has the highest figure—a total 50% of the cases. Then comes Havana with 17% of the cases, and Holguín with 15% of the cases (6%). On the other hand, the remaining provinces had a representation of 10%.

On studying the cases, it became clear that among the civil and political rights, the one most often violated was the right to not being arbitrarily arrested, as reflected in 52% of the cases. The second most often disregarded right was equality before the law, in 50% of the cases. And thirdly, with 43% of the cases, the right to freedom of expression and opinion. In this same context, it was determined that 72% of the cases reported included deprivation of liberty for the victims.



The 10 most violated rights during 2023

■ Percentage of cases



Finally, it is worth noting that only 4% of human rights violations were complained about with the local authorities, whereas only 1% were raised to international levels. This is due to the lack of impartiality in Cuban public entities, which revictimize those affected and do not offer any solutions to the complaints.

Conclusions

The multidimensional crisis in Cuba continues to deepen. From a social perspective, the needs of the population continue to increase as a result of the government's incompetence in providing basic services (e.g. electricity, water or internet). This translates into a migration crisis whose numbers continue to break records year after year.

From a political perspective, the divisions in the government have become increasingly palpable, which contradicts the discourse of unanimity that the Communist Party claims to project. Likewise, its inability to govern is reflected in its inability to provide basic services to citizens, including food. The government's most efficient policy continues to be repression, the severity of which is reflected in this report. The government's most efficient policy continues to be repression, the severity of which is reflected in the human rights violations reported here, with deprivation of liberty as its main weapon.

The economic dimension, for its part, continues to be weakened. Indicators are below targets in key sectors such as tobacco production and tourism. Likewise, the government's inability to pay has reduced imports of essential products such as gasoline and food, prolonging shortages on the island within a context of rising inflation.

In short, far from proposing effective solutions to important problems, the Cuban government continues to stick to a centralist rhetoric that prevents an improvement in the quality of life of Cubans.

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