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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Centrist Democratic International, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2011]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Violence against women in Cuba in 2010

The Centrist Democratic International is concerned that over 2010 and into early 2011 the Cuban government has engaged in a pattern of violence against women who are trying to exercise their basic rights or petition the government to free their husbands who are prisoners of conscience.

On March 18, 2010 Amnesty International issued an advisory “Cuba's ‘ladies in white’ [Damas de Blanco] at risk of beatings and intimidation” and reported that:

“On 15 March, State security officials visited Soledad Riva's home and advised her against taking part in the events organized by the Damas de Blanco.[The Damas de Blanco, an unofficial group of women relatives and friends of individuals imprisoned around a major crackdown around the 18 March 2003, have organized daily demonstrations in Havana during the week of the seventh anniversary of the arrests. Fifty-three of those arrested in March 2003 continue to be detained.] The officials warned her that if she took part in a demonstration she could risk being beaten and would not see her children again. Her children live abroad and Soledad has been seeking an exit visa to visit them, which so far has not been granted by Cuban authorities.”

Days later one of the leaders of the Damas de Blanco spoke with Amnesty International about the repression they had suffered at the hands of Cuban state security and the mob it had organized to attack the women and excerpts were reported on March 23, 2010 by Amnesty International news in “Cuban ‘Lady in White’ tells of police repression:”

“We also wanted to go to the house of Orlando Fundora, who had been on hunger strike. Although he had stopped it, we wanted to know about his health. His home is seven or eight blocks from the church. That is where they [the security forces] attacked us. We were walking with a gladioli [a flower] in our hands, as we always do, when they [government supporters] started shouting at us. We only replied by saying ‘Freedom!’ I have got many scratches and bruises on my body, because the police forced us onto buses. I still have a wound on my thumb.”

Between 2003 and March of 2010 the Damas de Blanco had been able to attend Mass at Santa Rita Church on Sundays and silently march for their loved one’s freedom. Then on March 2010 the Cuban government sent state security agents and rapid response brigades to attack these women and prevent them from walking. This repression went on over months. In May due to the persistence of the women and international scrutiny the Cuban government relented and allowed the Damas de Blanco to begin marching again, but the violence has not ended.

Human Rights Watch in their 2011 World Report’s Cuba section reported on the assault of two Women in White [Damas de Blanco] in October 2010 by the Cuban police who “were detained as they marched in Havana holding a banner that read: ‘Down with racism and long live human rights.’ Police transferred them to a police station and beat them, fracturing one woman’s nose and the other’s wrist, and held them without access to communications for seven hours.”

The plight of Reina Luisa Tamayo Danger, the mother of Orlando Zapata Tamayo who died on hunger strike on February 23, 2010 has been the target of especially brutal physical and psychological abuse.

On August 11, 2010 Amnesty International reported that “The mother of a Cuban prisoner of conscience who died after hunger striking has been repeatedly harassed and intimidated in an attempt to stop her from organizing marches to commemorate her son's death. The next march is planned for 15 August.” Amnesty International has called on Cuban

authorities to end the harassment of Reina Luisa Tamayo. In August of 2010 Amnesty International emitted a statement calling on “Cuba urged to end campaign against mother of dead hunger striker” and reported on how “six loudspeakers were installed near her house and were used to shout slogans against her and the Ladies in White, an organization of female relatives of prisoners of conscience campaigning for their release.” In addition Reina Luisa Tamayo on August 8, was confronted by government supporters, who blocked her path and, according to her recount, beat relatives and friends of the family. She said a police patrol was parked nearby watching the events, but failed to intervene.”

Despite Amnesty’s request the violence against Reina escalated and on November 1, 2010 the Cuban Democratic Directorate published Cuban independent journalist Caridad Caballero Batista’s report from Holguin in which she stated that “Reina was brutally beaten, detained, and handcuffed. The cemetery was completely surrounded by police, State Security, and the Rapid Response Brigades. At this point all phone lines belonging to not only the participants, but also to the activists who did not participate, have been cut. I have been told that some are detained in the Pedernales State Security Detention Center and others in the Police Unit in Holguin. The Cuban Democratic Directorate later confirmed that Reina Luisa Tamayo Danger had been beaten in the mouth, neck, and arms. Activist Marlon Martorell confirmed that at the moment of her arrest she was gagged with a gasoline-drenched cloth to silence her screams.

On November 8, 2010 in an interview with Reina Luisa Tamayo Danger the following information was obtained describing how the Cuban government was organizing to attack this woman and her family: “The Section 21 of the State Security surrounded Banes completely. High-ranking military officials wearing dark uniforms blocked the only entrance and exit to my home by stationing themselves at a building across the street. When I went outside to take pictures of the murderers and I saw those who had ran me over I yelled ‘Down with Fidel’, ‘Down with Zapata’s murderers’, and ‘Zapata Lives’. Quickly after that, one of the officials, a Major, ordered them to get me and they ran after me, almost ran me over with a police car, and pulled my arm without compassion [...], they forced me inside the car and violently forced my arms [...]. They said ‘what I really want to do is kill you, murder you. You killed your son.’”

The pretext of a medical exam to both humiliate and place at risk a pregnancy was a tactic utilized against Daneysi Gálvez Pereira. The young activist and wife of jailed prisoner of conscience Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, Daneysi Gálvez Pereira was placed in danger of suffering a miscarriage after being subjected by Cuban state security agents to two forced vaginal cavity examinations during a raid in Baracoa on August 12, 2010. Eight months pregnant she was forced to undress and they introduced a speculum into her vaginal cavity on two occasions after Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, his brother Rolando and three other activists were arrested at the home located in Apartment F on Calle Martí #434, in the neighborhood of Reforma Urbana in the above mentioned city. Three female police, one dressed as a doctor carried out this procedure. Daneysi described what was done to her to the Cuban Democratic Directorate via telephone on August 20: "They took my fingerprints and searched my body. They fully undressed me, another woman, and the girls too ... Afterwards came from Baracoa to my house [in Guantánamo] and at the terminal, I was detained and they took me to the barracks again. They completely searched me again ... When I arrived at Guantánamo, I had still not ridden on the bus and they placed me into a little car and took me to the headquarters here in Guantánamo, to Park 24 and they repeated the act. They won't leave me in peace. They have constant surveillance in front of my house. They won't stop bothering me ... I am outraged. I am at a loss for words. "The doctor who examined me, Beltran, told me that the cervix had shortened and was dilated three centimeters caused by the introduction of the speculum twice by the Baracoa Police Unit. This caused a loss of fluid," affirmed the young women to the Directorate via telephone on August 20.

The actions of the Cuban government over 2010 against Cuban women, including a pregnant woman is of great concern especially when taken into account that these are violent acts against women.
