



Cuba – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 January 2016

Information on whether membership of the Communist Party and its organs in Cuba is mandatory. Particularly: Whether membership of the Union Juvenes comunistas (UJC) is required to obtain a place in college; Whether membership of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (Pcc) is required by the state of Public Employees.

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to an information request issued in 2001 states:

“No references to specific penalties for refusing to join the Communist Youth Union (Union de Jovenes Comunistas, UJC), further to the information provided in CUB22608.E of 11 January 1996 and CUB11229 of 15 July 1992, could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, various sources allude to both the benefits of belonging and the possible consequences of not belonging to or rejecting membership in government political organizations.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (12 January 2001) *Cuba: Penalties for refusing to join the Communist Youth Union (Union de Jovenes Comunistas, UJC) (1997-2000)*)

More recent information as to whether membership of the Communist Party or the Communist Youth League is required to gain a place in college or government employment was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

A 2010 article from the Miami Herald states:

“A growing number of Cubans are leaving or refusing to join the Communist Party and the Communist Youth, Spain's La Vanguardia newspaper reported last week, without citing sources or exact figures.” (Miami Herald (11 April 2010) *Signs of frustration sprout, spread in Cuba*)

In an English translation of an article originally posted on the 14ymedio website the author states:

“Belonging to the UJC is no longer a guarantee to access the state meritocracy. Even the most popular singers, even if they keep a prudent distance from the open political opposition, have never carried communist youth membership cards. What icons or deals does the UJC have to offer? Traditionally, to be part of the organization meant an advantage for those who aspired to good recommendations in their records, obligatory for a university career or a job, the guarantee of belonging to a more favored caste. Today, with young Cubans competing to see who has the best cell phone, it is no longer like that. Without having been officially recognized, the principal enemies today of the Union of Young Communists are political apathy, the

loss of its significance and its function as a social placeholder.” (Gonzalez, Victor Ariel (24 February 2015) *Union of Young Communists (UJC): Who Is For That?* 14ymedio)

An article from the Havana Times states:

“Going out to the street and conversing with any young person, at random, can give us a sense of how accurate this impression is and reveals that most young people in Cuba are not at all interested in belonging to the Young Communists League.” (Havana Times (22 July 2015) *Is the Communist Youth (UJC) the only Organization Needed by Cuba’s Young People?*)

The most recent US Department of State country report on Cuba, in “Section 7. Worker Rights”, states:

“The government can determine that a worker is ‘unfit’ to work, resulting in job loss and the denial of job opportunities. Persons were deemed unfit because of their political beliefs, including their refusal to join the official union, and for trying to depart the country illegally.” (US Department of State (25 June 2015) *2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Cuba*, p.28)

An article from the Institute for War & Peace Reporting states:

“Cubans marked out as dissidents say it is nearly impossible to find work because of state controls over all areas of employment. For decades, the Cuban state was the sole employer, and despite recent reforms allowing for limited private enterprise known as ‘cuentapropismo’, getting an operating license still entails vetting by the authorities. Renato Olazábal was designated a ‘counterrevolutionary’ after an unsuccessful attempt to escape to the United States on a ‘balsa’ or home-made raft in 2006. Olazábal, a 38-year-old English graduate, said that afterwards, he found it next to impossible to find work, and was turned down for five public-sector jobs.” (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (6 August 2013) *Cuban Dissidents Shut Out of Job Market*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

Gonzalez, Victor Ariel (24 February 2015) *Union of Young Communists (UJC): Who Is For That?* 14ymedio
<http://translatingcuba.com/union-of-young-communists-ujc-who-is-for-that-14ymedio-victor-ariel-gonzalez/>
(Accessed 13 January 2016)

Havana Times (22 July 2015) *Is the Communist Youth (UJC) the only Organization Needed by Cuba’s Young People?*
<http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=112796>
(Accessed 14 January 2015)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (12 January 2001) *Cuba: Penalties for refusing to join the Communist Youth Union (Union de Jovenes Comunistas, UJC) (1997-2000)*
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3df4be2728.html>

Institute for War & Peace Reporting (6 August 2013) *Cuban Dissidents Shut Out of Job Market*
<https://iwpr.net/global-voices/cuban-dissidents-shut-out-job-market>
(Accessed 13 January 2016)

Miami Herald (11 April 2010) *Signs of frustration sprout, spread in Cuba*
<http://www.lexisnexis.com>
(Accessed 14 January 2016)

US Department of State (25 June 2015) *2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Cuba*
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236892.pdf>
(Accessed 13 January 2016)

Sources Consulted:

Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Google
Immigration and Refugee board of Canada
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UNHCR Refworld
US Department of State