
Freedom and Democracy for Cuba: the irony of the Helms-Burton Act

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“The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act,” cynical and manipulative since its very name, celebrated its first 25 years on March 12th. We know it as the Helms-Burton Act.

The pen with which president Bill Clinton signed that law in 1996, was later delivered to the already late leader of the Cuban counter-revolutionary exile, Jorge Mas Canosa, who headed, in those days, the Cuban-American National Foundation, organization where most of the plots and terrorist actions against Cuba have been masterminded. More than a protocol, that gesture should have been understood as the evidence of the first goals of the document. It was an event that the Cuban far-right highlighted as a “win” in its blinded fight against the Revolution.

But, basically the Helms-Burton Act is, since its emergence, a brutal, illegal mechanism trying to suffocate the economy of Cuba and, in the process, hurt third countries. The measures implemented against foreign companies and individuals by the mere fact of trading with the Caribbean nation, the demands set under the protection of this legislation and the lobbying work to avoid foreign investment in Cuba, confirm its aggressive and extraterritorial nature. And if that was not bad enough, this is a document that resorts to blackmailing.

Refusal of visas to enter the U.S. soil, multi-million dollar fines, confiscation of properties and assets...are some of the threats in which the law is supported to impede foreign investors to negotiate contracts in Cuba.

Much has been discussed about this law violating international right, a fact that has been even acknowledged by some political leaders within the United States. The truth is that its content is obviously political as it was intended to undermine all chances to improve the U.S.-Cuba relationship. Its four titles attest to this fact.

On May 2nd 2019, the Trump’s government activated the Title III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, which had been suspended by previous administrations, by giving prerogative so American and Cuban citizens —naturalized there— could file lawsuits in American courts against people making transactions with American properties nationalized in the island.

How would it be if some of these measures were implemented on the nation promoting them? Those with 25 years old or less have been born under the siege of this law, and have grown up not only with economic shortage, but they have also grown up with the disrespect of living under such Damocles sword in a sovereign country, capable of deciding its own future. A future built of courage and dignity.

Cuba will continue to defend its right to make its own decision and its right to be an independent island. There are no laws, sanctions, fake news, attempts to implement soft coups, that can attempt against the purpose to continue to defend all the accomplishment achieved and continue to perfect our social project.

As Fidel stated in 1994: *"(...) Making our country blow, as they have pretended and still have, would never be of benefits to the interests of the United States. It would make our country ungovernable for 100 years and the struggle would never end. Only the Revolution can make feasible the development and future of our country."*

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff
