Open Letter to President Obama to Take Concrete Action on Ending the US Blockade/Embargo on Cuba, and to Return Guantanamo to Cuba

We welcome President Obama’s decision to travel to Cuba for talks with the Cuban government.

We undersigned organizations and individuals call on President Obama to take concrete actions on two outstanding issues to restore normal diplomatic relations between the two countries:

1. End the 54 year old embargo/blockade of Cuba,
2. Return the US occupied territory of Guantanamo to Cuba.

Economic Impact of the Embargo/Blockade of Cuba

Cuba lost out on at least US$117 billion between 1960 and 2014 due to the U.S. economic blockade on the country, according to the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.iii

The embargo/blockade not only hurts Cuba, but also the US. The US Chamber of Commerce, which advocates lifting the embargo, states the cost to the US economy of the 54 year sanctions range from $1.2 to $3.6 billion per year.iv

On the US embargo/blockade of Cuba, President Obama can exercise his authority in the following areas:

1) authorize the use of the dollar in international transactions;
2) permit Cuba to import from third countries products with more than 10 percent U.S. components;
3) allow Cuban entities to open correspondent accounts in U.S. banks;
4) end the policy of financial persecution against Cuba;
5) not impede the granting of credits or other financial facilities;
6) allow imports of Cuba’s exportable products or services;
7) authorize Cuban planes and boats to carry passengers, cargo and mail between the two countries;
8) authorize direct exports of U.S. products to Cuba;
9) authorize companies to invest in Cuba (international firms have submitted more than 400 proposals for investment in the Mariel Economic Zone);
10) remove the limit on Cuban products that can be imported by U.S. visitors to Cuba;
11) authorize U.S. citizens to receive medical treatment in Cuba;
12) allow the distribution of credits, loans and financing for the acquisition of products in the U.S. market.

**The US Naval Base at Guantánamo**

The US Base at Guantánamo is 113 years old as of February 23, 2016. It was the first U.S. base in our hemisphere and is the oldest U.S. overseas base in the world, and the only one whose host country lacks contractual authority to unilaterally revoke it.

We call on President Obama to implement these actions to alleviate the US blockade on Cuba and to set a timetable for returning US occupied Guantanamo to the Cuban nation.

Noam Chomsky  
Chicago ALBA Solidarity Committee  
Medea Benjamin, Co-founder, Code Pink  
SOA Watch  
Rev. Michael Kinnamon, former General Secretary, National Council of Churches  
IFCO/Pastors for Peace  
Glen Ford, Executive Editor, Black Agenda Report  
Tom Hayden  
Carl Rosen, President of Western Region, United Electrical Workers (UE)  
Chuck Kaufman, National Coordinator, Alliance for Global Justice

Eva Golinger, Journalist/writer, *The Chavez Code; Bush vs Chavez*  
Marjorie Cohn, past President, National Lawyers Guild; Professor, Thomas Jefferson School of Law  
Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, former General Secretary, National Council of Churches  
Cindy Sheehan, Author/Activist  
James Early, Board member, Institute for Policy Studies  
Kevin Martin, Executive Director, Peace Action  
Council on Hemispheric Affairs  
Council on Latin American Relations  
Leah Bolger, CDR, USN (Ret), former National President, Veterans For Peace

José E. López, Executive Director, Puerto Rico Cultural Center  
Fred Hirsch, Delegate to the South Bay Labor Council  
Cristina Vazquez, International Vice President, Workers United WSRJB 52, SEIU  
Task Force on the Americas  
International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee  
Blasé Bonpane, Office of the Americas  
Rev. Kristin Stoneking, Executive Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation  
Dave Welsh, Delegate, San Francisco Labor Council  
Dan Kovalik, USW Associate General Counsel

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National Lawyers Guild, Cuba Subcommittee  
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Bill Preston, President. AFGE Local 17
David McReynolds, War Resisters League (retired)
Margaret Randall, author, *Haydée Santamaría, Cuban Revolutionary* (most recent)
Jane Franklin, Historian, *Cuba and the United States, A Chronological History*
Alex Main, Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR)
Historians Against the War

Delvis Fernandez Levy, Cuban American Alliance
Walter Lippmann, CubaNews, Los Angeles
Tiana Ocasio, President, Connecticut Chapter, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Stephen Kimber, journalist, author, *What Lies Across the Water, The Real Story of the Cuban 5*
David Swanson, author, WorldBeyondWar.org, WarisaCrime.org
New Internationalism Project of Institute for Policy Studies (IPS)
Alejandro Molina, Michelle Morales, National Boricua Human Rights Network; Campaign to Free Oscar Lopez Rivera
Sara Flounders, Co-Director, International Action Center
Rabbi Brant Rosen

John McAuliff, Executive Director, Fund for Reconciliation and Development; Coordinator, Cuba-US People to People Partnership
Cherrene Horazuk, President, AFSCME 3800 RootsAction.org
Hon. Jim Ferlo, President, Pittsburgh-Matanzas-Sister Cities Association
(Former City Council President and PA State Senator 1988-2014, now retired)
Salim Lamrani, author, *The Economic War Against Cuba*
Tom Hansen, International Education Director, Mexico Solidarity Network
Arnold August, journalist, author, *Cuba and its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion*
Dan Beeton, CEPR

Reese Erlich, author, *Dateline Havana*
Albert A. Fox, Jr., President, Alliance for Responsible Cuba Policy Foundation
Art Heitzer, Wisconsin Coalition to Normalize Relations with Cuba
Pam Africa, Suzanne Ross, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal
Joe Iosbaker. Co-Chair, SEIU Local 73 Joint Bargaining Committee at UIC
Richard Berg, past President, Teamsters Local 743
Matt Meyer, War Resisters International; International Peace Research Association
Keith Bolender, author, *Voices From the Other Side: An Oral History of Terrorism Against Cuba; Cuba Under Siege: American Policy, the Revolution and Its People*
Bob Guild, Vice President, Marazul Charters, Inc.

Charles A. Serrano, ASG International, Inc.
Elizabeth Hill, President, Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto
Mike Beilstein, Corvallis, OR City Councilor
8th Day Center for Justice
Lisa Valanti, President US-CUBA Sister Cities Association
Church Women United, New York State
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America
Kathy Kelly, Voices for Creative Nonviolence
The Friendship Association (formerly St. Augustine-Baracoa Friendship Association)

Minnesota Cuba Committee
Wendy Thompson, former Pres. L. 235, UAW, American Axle Detroit Gear & Axle
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Alice Slater, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Catherine Murphy, The Literacy Project
Marcela Vásquez-León, Director, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Arizona
Dereka Rushbrook, Associate Professor, School of Geography & Development; Co-Director, Contemporary Cuba Study Abroad Program, University of Arizona
Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba
US Women and Cuba Collaboration

Let Cuba Live Committee of Maine
Heide Trampus, Coordinator, Worker to Worker, Canada-Cuba Labour Solidarity Network
Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee
Ken Crowley, National Delegations Organizer, Witness for Peace
Portland Central America Solidarity Committee
Houston Peace and Justice Center
Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA)
Kentucky Interfaith on Latin America and the Caribbean
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Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Committee, DC Metropolitan Area
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Kathryn Albrecht, journalist/writer, Nueva Mexico
Shirley Warren, New Paltz Women In Black
Nebraskans for Peace
Corinne Willinger, Granny Peace Brigade, NYC Metro Raging Grannies

Lee Robinson, African Awareness Association
Rockford Peace and Justice Action Committee
All-African People's Revolutionary Party (GC)
Meredith Aby, Minnesota Anti-War Committee
LELO (Legacy of Leadership, Equality and Organizing)
Carl Finamore, Machinist Lodge 1781 delegate, San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Kait McIntyre, Chicago Anti-War Committee
Rev. Mother Marcy, founder, Public Intellectuals for Social and Spare Change
Charles Newlin, Coordinating Committee Linn-Benton Pacific Green Party (Oregon)
Bert Hestroffer, International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Marcela Vásquez-León, Director, Center for Latin American Studies, Associate Professor, Univ. of Arizona
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Sarah Blue, Assistant Professor of Geography, Texas State University

United States Palestinian Community Network (USPCN)
Ann Eagan, Treasurer, Manhattan Green Party
Francis Shor, Professor Emeritus, History, Wayne State University
Sherry Millner, Professor, CUNY, College of Staten Island.
Lucille Roussin, Prof., Dir. Holocaust Restitution Claims Practicum, Cardozo School of Law (NYC)
Cole Harrison, Executive Director, Massachusetts Peace Action
William H. Slavick, Professor of English, University of Southern Maine (retired)
Alberto N Jones, President Caribbean American Children Foundation, Palm Coast, Florida

Hermann Engelhardt, Senior Research Associate in Geophysics, Emeritus, California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech)
Ken Hayes SOAW-Austin, TX
Mary Ann Jones, Southern Oregon Friends of Cuba
Rob Kall, Publisher, OpEdNews.com
Kim Scipes, Editor of Building Global Labor Solidarity in a Time of Accelerating Globalization

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The US International Trade Commission makes a similar estimate:
http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/time-end-cuba-embargo
“By 1992, U.S. businesses had lost over $30 billion in trade over the previous thirty years, according to researchers from Johns Hopkins. At that time, Cuba’s loss for the same period was smaller, but not by much: $28.6 billion, according to Cuba’s Institute of Economic Research.”

A study by the Cuba Policy Foundation estimated that the annual cost to the US economy could be $4.84 billion in agricultural exports and related economic output. "America's Farmers Bearing Heavy Burden for U.S. Embargo Against Cuba: New Report,"
www.cubafoundation.org, Jan. 28, 2002