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Human Rights Foundation (HRF) (13.01.2015) - condemns the multiple arbitrary arrests of Cuban artist Tania Bruguera on charges of "disobedience," "incitement to disorderly conduct" and "incitement to commit a crime," and calls on President Raúl Castro to dismiss the case against her immediately. On December 30, 2014, Bruguera planned to stage an open mic performance in Havana's Revolution Square, but state security officers showed up at her house early that morning and placed her under arrest, only releasing her after the set time for the event had passed. Over the next two days, Bruguera was detained and released two more times. Cuban authorities also seized her computer and her passport, preventing her from leaving the island.

"Bruguera's only 'weapons' were a microphone and her determination to shine a ray of light into the darkness of a military dictatorship that has censored every independent word in Cuba for the last 56 years," said Thor Halvorssen, president of HRF. "Natan Sharansky's famous 'town square test' put it best: 'if a person can walk into the middle of the town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, imprisonment or physical harm, then that person is living in a free society. If not, it's a fear society.' Outrageously, the Castros have kept Cuba a fear society for over half a century," said Halvorssen.

Tania Bruguera, an internationally acclaimed installation and performance artist, traveled to Havana in recent days to perform "Tatlin's Whisper #6," an event that, in the [words](#) of the artist, "would allow Cubans to speak with their own voice about issues that concern them on the verge of a new year." The performance—organized on Twitter using the hashtag [#YoTambienExijo](#)—was scheduled to take place on December 30, 2014, at 3pm in Havana's Revolution Square. However, several hours before the event was set to begin state security officers [arrested](#) Bruguera at her house in El Vedado. The agents, who did not present a search warrant, took her computer and some equipment, including a black marker and a white T-shirt with [#YoTambienExijo](#) written on it. Bruguera was then taken to a police station for questioning, where she was verbally notified of the possible charges against her. She was kept in custody for several hours, until after the time set for the performance, and was only released after being compelled to sign "some papers," of which she was not given a copy.

Bruguera was [arrested](#) again the following day, after using Twitter to convene a new performance at the Monument to the Victims of the USS Maine in Havana's Malecón. While on her way to the event, a squad car pulled her over and took her to a police station. The next day, on January 1, Bruguera and about a dozen other activists gathered outside the Vivac prison on the outskirts of Havana. They demanded the release of ten activists who had been detained for trying to attend Bruguera's original Revolution Square performance. State security agents then proceeded to [arrest](#) Bruguera for the third time in three days.

"It has been very difficult to find a lawyer who's willing to take my case. They're scared of doing anything against the government," said Bruguera in a phone conversation with HRF. "State security told me it's 'better' if I leave Cuba, but they still have my passport," she lamented.

In Cuba, attorneys are [forced to join](#) the National Organization of Collective Law Offices ([ONBC](#)) in order to practice their profession legally. The ONBC is a centralized guild controlled by the government that is subordinate to the guidelines of the Communist Party. According to the Preamble and Article 4 of the ONBC's [Code of Ethics](#), all attorneys admitted to practice in Cuba "shall consciously assume and contribute—within their duties—to defend, preserve and be faithful to the principles comprised in the nation, the revolution and socialism," and this shall be done "imbued with the righteous, noble and humane ideas of Socialism and inspired by the example set by the Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz."

"As the International Commission of Jurists [documented](#) over 50 years ago, the Cuban justice system continues to be, both formally and in practice, the Communist Party's preferred instrument to harass, incarcerate and punish any critic of the one-party regime," said Javier El-Hage, general counsel of HRF. "One of the key components of this repressive machinery is the use of vague and overly broad 'incitement' charges to criminalize and stifle even the most basic expressions of dissent, like holding an open mic event, blogging, or circulating leaflets. The modus operandi of Cuba's dictatorship is strikingly similar to that of Saudi Arabia in their conviction of human rights lawyer [Waleed Abu AlKhair](#) for 'inciting public opinion' by running a critical website, or that of the Chinese dictatorship in the imprisonment of Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo for 'inciting to overthrow the government' by circulating a pro-democracy [manifesto](#)," said El-Hage.

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies. We believe that all human beings are entitled to freedom of self-determination, freedom from tyranny, the rights to speak freely, to associate with those of like mind, and to leave and enter their countries. Individuals in a free society must be accorded equal treatment and due process under law, and must have the opportunity to participate in the governments of their countries; HRF's ideals likewise find expression in the conviction that all human beings have the right to be free from arbitrary detainment or exile and from interference and coercion in matters of conscience. HRF does not support nor condone violence. HRF's International Council includes human rights advocates George Ayittey, Vladimir Bukovsky, Palden Gyatso, Garry Kasparov, Mutabar Tadjibaeva, Elie Wiesel, and Harry Wu.
