

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 10, 2019

The Honorable Samuel D. Brownback
Ambassador at Large
for International Religious Freedom
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Kimberly Breier
Assistant Secretary of State
for Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ambassador Brownback and Assistant Secretary Breier,

We write to express our grave concerns raised to us by constituents regarding Ramón Rigal, a Cuban pastor, and his wife Adya, and at least two other fathers, who reportedly were detained in Cuba in March and April of this year for homeschooling their children. These appalling detentions reveal that the malevolent Cuban dictatorship does not respect basic human rights, including the internationally recognized rights to religious liberty and the ability of parents to decide how best to educate their children.

We greatly appreciate that President Donald Trump and several high-level officials within his administration have strongly and consistently condemned the suppression of fundamental rights in Cuba and other oppressive regimes. In particular, the President and his administration have demonstrated bold leadership in U.S.-Cuba policy by cutting off revenue to the Cuban military, and extending remarkable solidarity to the Cuban people in their demands for democracy and human rights. The Cuban people will remember that this administration stood firmly with them in their struggle.

Among those in that struggle are brave individuals such as Pastor Rigal, who has suffered grave consequences for daring to oppose the regime's attempts to maintain absolute control over the most sacred aspects of the Cuban people's personal lives. Despite the risks that parents such as Pastor Rigal face, they have held firm to their belief that homeschooling is the best option to providing their children with an independent education that is consistent with their values. Shamefully, the regime in Cuba has punished them for acting on their beliefs and what they have determined to be in the best interests of their children.

In light of these detentions of homeschooling parents, we respectfully encourage the administration to consider reiterating its support for basic human rights and liberties. Accordingly, we suggest, within all applicable rules and regulations, that you assess whether to strongly condemn these appalling detentions while expressing unqualified solidarity with the oppressed Cuban people consistent with America's overall commitment to promoting freedom in Cuba. It is unconscionable that those courageous individuals who choose to homeschool their children in Cuba, as well as those with religious beliefs that the regime determines are a threat to its despotic grip on power, suffer imprisonment for acting on their deeply held beliefs regarding the best interests of their families.

We roundly commend the administration's effective actions to promote freedom and democracy in totalitarian Cuba, and thank you for your attention to this matter of utmost importance.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Alex Mooney
Member of Congress