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Cuba: Further bans on freedom of expression

Amnesty International today expressed concern at the impact on freedom of expression and information of Cuba's new law restricting internet access.

"The new measures, which limit and impede unofficial internet use, constitute yet another attempt to cut off Cubans' access to alternative views and a space for discussing them," said Amnesty International as a new law came into force on Saturday. "This step, coming on top of last year's prosecution of 75 activists for peacefully expressing their views, gives the authorities another mechanism for repressing dissent and punishing critics."

The new law, which came into effect on 10 January, limits internet access to those, such as officially recognised businesses and government offices, with special telephone accounts payable in US dollars. This prevents ordinary Cuban people from accessing the service.

"Amnesty International fears that the new measures are intended to prevent human rights monitoring by restricting the flow of information out of Cuba," the organisation said.

"The Cuban authorities must do away with illegitimate curbs on freedom of expression and information, and must bring their legislation into line with international human rights standards once and for all," Amnesty International concluded.

Background Information

The vast majority of Cuba's media are state-owned and -controlled. Cubans' access to foreign media is limited. However, Cuban government sources have reportedly indicated that they believe up to 40,000 Cubans have unofficial access to the internet.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its article 19, guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers". These rights have been further codified and protected in standards such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the UN Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation of Provisions in the ICCPR (1985) and the Johannesburg Principles on National Security, Freedom of Expression and Access to Information (1996).

Amnesty International is currently campaigning for the immediate and unconditional release of 84 prisoners of conscience in Cuba, incarcerated for the peaceful exercise of fundamental freedoms.

Public Document

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