

Cuba's prison business: 60,000 prisoners are used as slave labor

The Cuban government consolidates forced labor and slavery as its main economic drivers, exporting their production to Europe



First Comprehensive Report on Forced Labor in Cuban Prisons

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**PRISONERS
DEFENDERS**

**CZECH
AID** **TRANSITION**
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Consorcio Justicia

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INTRODUCTION

This complaint report exposes the alarming situation of forced labor in Cuban prisons, revealing and demonstrating, without leaving room for doubt, the painful and criminal situation of **forced labor exercised by the State, for economic and punitive purposes on a total of 60,000 of the [prison inmates and 37,458 individuals serving open sentences in the country](#)**. The report documents with complete qualitative and quantitative precision how prisoners are subjected to inhumane and exploitative conditions in an absolute and unpunished disconnection from international law and any labor rights. Through an exhaustive analysis of all Cuban legislation throughout this complaint, in addition, we demonstrate how **the laws in Cuba explicitly and impudently enforce forced labor on prisoners and convicts**. The elaboration of charcoal, agricultural, tobacco or sugar cane cutting (the "zafra") under the most inhuman conditions of slavery, and the production obtained from such work, is destined in its entirety for export, mainly to European countries such as, in this order, **Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Turkey**, among others. For the first time in many years, Cuba is facing **increasing international accusations, including just months ago at the United Nations Human Rights Committee ([A/HRC/57/46](#)), for subjecting persons deprived of their liberty to contemporary forms of slavery for the production of goods for export**. The following complaint report compiles innumerable and incontestable quantitative and qualitative evidence on these practices, using official information, hundreds of interviews, and 53 tabulated, structured and statistically processed statements.

METHODOLOGY

This complaint report is based on [53 individual statements](#) from persons deprived of liberty in Cuba who were subjected to correctional labor while serving their sentences, as corroborated by their official decisions and judgments. The questionnaire included **61 key questions** (plus identification variables) and was administered by Prisoners Defenders between **April and August 2025**. The selection was **simple random** within the reference universe (**60,000** persons deprived of liberty under correctional labor), and each testimony was **validated** before inclusion. To better understand the phenomenon and contrast patterns, **more than 60 additional interviews** were conducted and **documentary sources** – including official internal documents – **externally verified** by the **Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research (Birkbeck, University of London)** were used. All testimonies are **anonymized** and with **informed consent**; victim identification is only provided to international protection mechanisms, although all those who authorize it may be put in contact with the media outlets that wish to do so. The analysis combines **quantitative and qualitative evidence** and it has been triangulated and cross-checked by Prisoners Defenders with previous documentation and records to ensure **consistency and traceability**.

TECHNICAL DATA

- **Universe of study:** 60,000 persons criminally sanctioned in Cuba and performing "correctional" work.
- **Sample size:** [53 valid statements](#) (one per person) from individuals belonging to the study universe. The statements, anonymized, can be downloaded [HERE](#).
- **Instrument:** structured questionnaire with 61 key questions.
- **Sampling design:** simple random sampling (SRS).
- **Fieldwork:** April-August 2025.
- **Inclusion criteria:** persons criminally sanctioned and subjected to "correctional" work (2021-2025).
- **Sources and external verification:** additional interviews (≥60), official documents and verification by ICPR (Birkbeck).
- **Ethics and security:** comprehensive anonymization and informed consent; release of identifying data only to protection agencies.
- **Estimation and inference:** proportions with **95% CI (Wilson method; Clopper-Pearson for 0%/100%)**; **correction for verified finite population** (nonmaterial effect with N=60,000). **Worst-case precision (p≈50%): ±13.5 p.p. (95%). DEFF=1 (SRS)**.
- **Weighting:** No weights are applied; each observation counts equally.
- **Valid denominator:** each percentage is calculated over the **valid n** per question (reported when it varies).

PRELIMINARY EXTRACTS

Although the rich and extensive results of this study will be presented throughout this document, it is useful to indicate that, from the analysis of the 53 valid testimonies collected, systematic patterns of forced labor were identified in **100%** of the cases analyzed. Although all the findings will be detailed throughout the complaint report, by way of example and as an introduction, we list some of them:

- **100% of the respondents were forced to work under coercion, threats, violence or reprisals** (53 out of 53).
- **69.81% of the affiants did not sign a labor contract or receive any document** regulating their relationship (37 out of 53).
- **98.11% of the affiants worked without the necessary tools, education and training or work tools** (52 out of 53).
- **96.23% of the respondents were subjected to serious risks** due to climatic and environmental conditions (sun, heat, cold, pests, etc.) (51 out of 53).
- **81.13%, 43 of the affiants, reported serious physical and psychological deterioration** as a consequence of forced labor in such conditions (43 out of 53).
- **45.28% of the respondents suffered physical violence** during work (24 out of 53).
- **81.13%, 43 of the declarants, did not even receive a salary as such:** 35 were allegedly assigned a salary, but **18 were not assigned any salary remuneration at all** (33.96% of the 53), **25 were withheld with the excuse of using such withholding to defray the cost of work tools, work clothes, food and/or water** (71.43% of the 35 who were assigned an alleged salary), **and for 9 of the declarants the amount was only symbolic** (less than \$4 per month, 47.37% of the 35 who were assigned an alleged salary). **If the amount to determine the symbolic salary had been set at \$15 per month, none of them could have been considered remunerated.** This would have been logical, but in Cuba a large part of the population earns less than 15 dollars a month, despite the fact that these salaries do not allow subsistence in Cuba.
- **All the women**, 8 out of 53 respondents, **were victims of abusive conditions.** Among the abuses, 87.50% were forced to work in degrading and unsuitable jobs; 50% suffered sexual harassment and violence (by officials and also by other inmates) and **1 of them was raped. Another of them was even forced to work during her pregnancy.**

SAMPLE TESTIMONIES

Although all the testimonies will be analyzed throughout the document, by way of introduction we expose some of the sentences from open text fields that will undoubtedly put in context the very serious situation that we unveil in this complaint:

- *"I was forced to carry sacks of charcoal with shoulder injuries. When I protested, they took away my family visits for a month".*
- *"You had to cut the Marabú, make the fire to generate the charcoal, and pack 50 sacks of charcoal a day." "By not meeting the daily work target on time, you had to work longer hours."*
- *"We get paid between 34 and 62 cents per ton of marabou charcoal produced entirely by us."*
- *"To produce the charcoal, we sleep in the field, no beds, no roof... We have to make ourselves makeshift huts and are only allowed to sleep on straw bales. Mattresses are not allowed ... We can only drink the dirty water from a trough where the cows drink from on a nearby farm."*
- *"She cut her hand because of the lack of security."*
- *"I saw an inmate who fractured her foot and was told that if she went to the doctor she could no longer get out of pass, and she had no choice, she was a mother of small children. The head of the camp then told her: put on promotion and don't say anything."*
- *"As a consequence of forced labor without medical care, I got sepsis from bacteria in my hands and body."*
- *"They force us to work, even if they are sick."*
- *"I suffered the mutilation of a finger on my right hand due to the working conditions."*
- *"There is constant physical and psychological mistreatment. What I want is for justice to be done."*

- "As a result of that experience, I suffer from post-traumatic stress to this day: hair loss, sweating hands, panic attacks, anxiety and insomnia."
- "I saw how he had a serious leg wound and was not given medical attention."
- "I had a 6-stitch wound on my right hand due to lack of protective material."
- "I had several episodes of fainting at work due to weakness and lack of food and water."
- "I cut my finger with the machete I was working with in a wet area, and it slipped into my other hand cutting my finger."
- "The forced labor camp "El Yabú" is a neo-fascist concentration camp in which all human rights are violated, terrible living conditions, poor nutrition, physical and verbal torture."
- "I never signed a contract. I was told that if I didn't work, I wouldn't see sunlight for weeks. It was either that or the dungeon."
- "We were sent to the field at 5 am, without gloves or boots. Rain or shine. When we came back there was no food and no doctor."
- "I had diabetes and asthma. They forced me to cut cane. I almost fainted three times, but if I asked to rest, they threatened to take away my minimum and lock me up in a prison of maximum rigor."
- "Now I am in very bad health, due to the mistreatment and the inadequate way they treat us political prisoners and prisoners of conscience."
- "There were many inmates sexually harassed by the guards inside the prison, and beaten by the guards, the same ones who gave the beating to Mayelín Prado and other prisoners."
- "I suffered the fabrication of disciplinary infractions for demanding the need for adequate implements and the delivery of a salary."
- "I suffered revocation to the severe regime when I refused to work in the sun because of my severe dermatological conditions. As a result, a disciplinary commission recommended that I be returned to the most severe regime once again."
- "If I didn't work, I was sanctioned to return to the most severe regime."
- "They threatened to take away passes and visits."
- "For refusing to work they took away my conjugal visits".
- "I was sanctioned for refusing to work because I didn't have cleaning tools. They told us to demand our families to bring us instruments [for work]. If not, we would be punished."
- "They gave me a disciplinary infraction for going to rest and having a snack. I reminded them that I am an HIV patient, and they didn't understand that."
- "For demanding improvements in nutrition, working conditions and transportation, I was taken to XXXX maximum security prison in XXXX." (prison name censored to avoid identification by the repressive apparatus).
- "...multiple wounds on my legs. Due to poor medical care I have been left with immense ailments."
- "I lost my vision due to lack of protection".
- ...

PHYSICAL SEQUELAE

43 of the 53 political prisoners interviewed have had and have health sequelae caused after years of forced labor. These are some of those reported:

- "My kidney had serious consequences, to the point of not being able to perform any kind of activity" (3 similar cases).
- "Due to situations of psychological mistreatment I presented serious problems with blood pressure" (4 similar cases).
- "Serious spinal problems" (9 similar cases).
- "Mutilation of a finger of the right hand".
- "I got worse in all aspects of my illness. At the moment I can hardly walk because the sciatica is chronic and the wear and tear on my bones is almost total. My vision has worsened to such an extent that I have lost 90% of my sight. Due to poor nutrition, my gastritis has turned into an ulcer".
- "High blood pressure and loss of teeth."

- "Tuberculosis, a highly contagious and deadly lung disease."
- "Bilateral osteochondritis. Hypothyroidism."
- "Post-traumatic stress, hair loss and sleep loss."
- "Generalized anxiety. Personality disorder. Generalized stress. Chronic insomnia".
- ...

In view of the results of the study, we were able to verify how **94.34% of the 53 declared prisoners were forced to work with illnesses incompatible with brutal performances**, such as charcoal work, sugar cane cutting, agriculture or construction (usually to make their private houses for the State Security commanders of the prisons), with an average workload of **63.06 hours per week** spread over **6 to 7 days per week** and an average of **10 hours of work per day**. **98.11% (52 of the 53) reported that they were not provided with medication for their ailments, medical treatment nor adequate medical follow-up**. Only 3 of the 53 (5.66%) reported that, before starting forced labor, they were medically evaluated. 27 of the 53 (49.06%), in addition, reported that their families brought them nonprescription medicines, but these were not given to them by the authorities. Only 1 of the 53 interviewed reported an average of less than 8 hours of work per day, and it was 7 hours per day for 6 days per week (42 hours/week). **14 of the 53 stated that they did not have a single short break per day**, and the rest (39) reported breaks of between 20 and 30 minutes per day.

FORCED LABOR ACTIVITIES AMONG COMMON PRISONERS

From the studies and research conducted for this complaint report, these are the main products worked on by common prisoners subjected to forced labor:

Table 1: forced labor activities among common prisoners

Activity	Ranking of forced labor performed by common prisoners
Production of marabou charcoal	1 st place (priority and growing activity)
Sugar cane cutting (sugar cane harvest)	2nd place
Other agricultural production	3rd place
Others (construction, factories, Cuban cigars, raw materials, etc.)	4th place
Waste	5th place
Street cleaning	6th place
Work in state institutions of a social nature	7th place

The impunity with which the work is structured is of such magnitude that **the Generals and high commanders of the army use the common and political prisoners to build their own private mansions**, a fact that the declarants and a multitude of other prisoners and former prisoners in the additional triangulation interviews have been able to corroborate.

In this regard, the political prisoner V.P. expressed the same as the rest, with details worthy of note:

"Charcoal: the prisoners make thousands of tons annually and, if they are paid, they are paid a miserable salary [less than \$4 a month], they are kept living in very rustic huts created by themselves, with no ventilation, no mattress, no refrigerators or minibars to keep the food they provide and cook themselves. Charcoal is the most terrible of all forced labor, not only because of the poor living conditions, but also because of the lack of tools to work with. More than 90% of the prisoners who work in the charcoal industry have a high prison sentence: they will submit to anything for not going back behind bars. That is why they do not complain and quietly carry out their assigned task. To complain is to go back to the maximum rigorously closed prison. They know it and the police use it as a means of repression.

Communal: the prisoners sweep the streets, cut the grass on the side of the streets and highways, and most of them do it with only a machete, so it is very hard work, without snacks, without uniforms equipped for the job, or proper footwear. Each prisoner provides himself with his own precarious work tools within his means.

Agriculture: they work long days under the sun, without food to sustain themselves and with terrible working conditions.

Cleaning of hospitals, polyclinics and police establishments: This is mostly done by female inmates. They must clean the floors and toilets, no slackers, no buckets.... They have to get their own tools for the job. The bathrooms in these places are very dirty, full of urine and feces, they stink and are a source of viruses and diseases. They have to squeeze out urine-soaked mats without even gloves for their hands. It's disgusting.

Tobacco: the Tabacuba Group is one of the most powerful companies in the country and it is more profitable for them to work with prisoners, since they work for a very low salary, or nonexistent, in 10-hour shifts, without conditions, and very poorly fed."

EXPORTS OF CHARCOAL PRODUCED UNDER SLAVERY IN CUBA

We present a summary of Cuba's charcoal ("wood charcoal", HS code 4402) export figures, based on data available from reliable sources such as the [Observatory of Economic Complexity](#) (OEC), contrasted with the World Bank (through WITS).

In 2023, Cuba exported **\$61.8 million of charcoal produced under slave labor** (tens of thousands of common and some political prisoners), making it the **ninth largest charcoal exporter in the world** (out of 159). During the same year, **charcoal produced under slave labor was Cuba's sixth most exported merchandise** (out of a total of 414). In 2023, the main destinations for Cuba's charcoal exports were, in this order, **SPAIN, PORTUGAL, GREECE, ITALY** and **TURKEY**. The **fastest growing** markets for Cuba's charcoal exports between 2022 and 2023 were Spain (with a growth of USD 5.02 million), Portugal (with a growth of USD 3.53 million) and Italy (with a growth of USD 2.99 million).

However, Spain exported \$23 million worth of charcoal (HS 4402) in 2023, ¹ with the main destinations being **FRANCE, ITALY, GERMANY, THE NETHERLANDS**, and **THE UNITED KINGDOM**. so it is likely that, given the low purchase and import costs, this volume may include tons of Cuban marabou charcoal produced by prisoners and condemned under slavery, which the Cuban government markets through European companies, distributing the margin among them all.

These countries also have a responsibility, now, of being aware of these issues and inspecting importers at their destination.

Table 2: Annual figures for Cuban charcoal exports ("Marabú charcoal") produced under slavery.

Year	Value	Main markets
2023	61.8 Mill. USD 61.8 MILLION	Mainly to SPAIN (USD 15.7 million), PORTUGAL (USD 13.5 million), GREECE (USD 12.9 million), ITALY (USD 8.63 million) and TURKEY (USD 7.07 million).
2022	46.1 million USD. USD 46.1 MILLION	Greece, Spain and Portugal.

MARKETERS IN EUROPE OF CUBAN "MARABU CHARCOAL"

A large number of distributors of Cuban marabu charcoal are listed below. Those importing companies on this list that do not autonomously control the production in Cuba and all the human resources associated with it, are fed with marabu charcoal produced throughout Cuba by a labor force of tens of thousands of common and political prisoners in slavery. Given that the production of marabou charcoal is controlled by the State, it is logical to think that, if not 100%, practically all of these trading companies are nourished by the State's production under the conditions described in this complaint report.

A MATTER OF PROFIT

Therefore, all or many of the importers are either unaware that this marabu charcoal from the state is produced under forced labor, or they are well aware of this fact as a cause to obtain unbeatable prices and

¹ Series de UN Comtrade (via [TrendEconomy](#)).

margins (taking into account the payment of between 32 and 64 cents per ton of marabu charcoal produced by the prisoners), with huge profits at the expense of the suffering of the Cuban prisoners in slavery. The calculation is simple. **With those production costs, given that the Cuban government's selling price per ton based on official import figures obtained from EUROSTAT for the European market are approximately \$500 per ton (2024), the export margin would be 99,96%.**

Table 3: Cuban charcoal export in 2024 produced under slavery (Source: EUROSTAT)

Markets	2024 (Kg)	2024 (Euros)	2024 (Euros/t)
EU (27)	86.748.805,000	40.276.552	464
Greece	17.565.680,000	9.991.812	569
Spain	23.356.338,000	10.395.439	445
Italy	12.158.338,000	5.210.260	429
Portugal	27.400.481,000	11.247.784	410
Turkey	12.582.552,000	4.839.249	385

As for the market price of charcoal in Spain, in the Spanish domestic market charcoal (holm oak/marabu, catering quality) typically moves in the range of **≈ €1,300-1,500/ton** (excluding VAT), with retail prices in the range **≈ €1,200-1,400/ton** depending on format and quality, where the 15Kg bag is frequent and sets the price. That is, for each 15kg sack that a consumer buys in Spain, and with the real average exchange rate of 1.08 dollars per euro for 2024, **retailers in Spain received 21.06 USD, the Cuban government received 7.88 USD, and the prisoner or condemned subject to forced labor received 0.00925610 USD** (less than 10 thousandths of a dollar).

Table 4: calculations of market margins for the Cuban charcoal market from slavery

Calculation variable	Amounts	Units
Average purchase price per ton imported into Spain (2024)	500,00	USD/t
Average selling price per ton in the retail channel in Spain (2024)	1.404,32	1,404.32 USD/t
Cuban forced labor payment (in Cuban peso, per tonne)	253	Cuban pesos
Real exchange rate of Cuban peso to U.S. dollar (8/31/2025)	<u>410</u>	pesos per dollar
Remuneration per ton of Cuban workers (dollars)	0,62	dollars/ton
Bag of charcoal (15 kg)	0,015	t
Price per 15 kg bag on the retail market	21,06	dollars
Margin for the Cuban government	7,50	dollars
Margin for the retailer to the Spanish market	13,56	dollars
Margin for Cuban producer (subjected to slave labor)	0,00925610	dollars
Total gross export margin	99,96%	
Cuban government gross margin	35,56%	
Spanish marketer's gross margin	64,40%	

It is very evident that **the excessive profit motive is the only driver that moves the Cuban regime to enslave its prisoners and condemned, and the marketers to commercialize it.** The "revolution" is a concept (already demonstrably false) that can wait another 67 years to materialize while enslaving its people. **What cannot wait is the system of rights and justice of the European Union in the face of this criminal barbarism against humanity, where hundreds of companies must be involved, and all of them operate mainly in our territory.**

THERE MAY BE EXCEPTIONS

There could be worthy exceptions to this slave trade among importers mentioned below but, with the indicated cost prices and with the Cuban government's omnipresent control over production such as charcoal, it is not easy to imagine this from the outset. The countries involved, such as **SPAIN, PORTUGAL, ITALY, GREECE, and TURKEY**, and the **EUROPEAN UNION** –due to its involvement in importing within our territory

and regulatory control— should examine each and every one of these and other companies importing marabou charcoal into their respective territories, and put an end to the trade in this charcoal where production cannot be controlled in a comprehensive and integral manner, and not just declaratively, under European standards, since **Cuban standards for marabou charcoal production, as demonstrated, are based on the slavery of tens of thousands of Cuban prisoners.**

THE EU'S OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITY

The marketing of a product of slavery can now be immediately prohibited by the European authorities. The evidence presented in this complaint report, together with the hundreds of testimonies that can be gathered in Cuba and abroad, is more than sufficient for this, but not without **a formal verification process by the European authorities.**

This complaint report has been sent to all European authorities and political forces so that this verification and due diligence process can begin as soon as possible.

EUROPEAN LAW (SOME APPLICABLE LEGAL PRINCIPLES)

The **production of marabou charcoal in Cuba by means of forced labor of prisoners** constitutes a direct violation of Articles 5.2 of the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** and 4 of the **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)**, as well as **ILO Conventions 29 and 105**. According to the **EUFLR**, the entry and marketing in the EU of this charcoal, once the existence of forced labor has been determined following an investigation by the competent authority, should be prohibited as soon as it is proven, as this complaint report and the documentary evidence contained in it do, its direct and evident link with forced labor. For its part, the **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)** obliges European companies to refrain from integrating into value chains based on forced labor, and importing and distributing companies in the EU are obliged by the **CSDDD** to exercise due diligence. If they fail to do so, they incur administrative (fines) and civil liability to the victims. The continued commercialization of Cuban marabou charcoal on the European market constitutes a **violation of existing and future European regulations**, as well as of the international commitments of the Member States.

In addition to these considerations, complementary national law also strengthens the possible immediate actions to be taken with respect to the commercialization of this forced labor product. Below, we present the grounds of complementary national law in the affected countries that should prevent the importation of products that, like Cuban marabou charcoal, are obtained through the scourge of forced labor.

The prohibition of its sale is not an objective in itself, but a duty, but the most relevant thing is that this action would be the only viable mechanism to prevent Cuban prisoners from being forcibly subjected to one of the most abject labors that a human being can perform: the elaboration of marabou charcoal in slavery conditions more typical of the middle age than of our era.

SPANISH LAW (SOME APPLICABLE LEGAL PRINCIPLES)

- **Proposed Due Diligence Law for large companies**

In 2022, the Spanish government included in its Regulatory Plan a draft law that would oblige *transnational* companies operating in Spain to implement human rights and environmental due diligence plans, including sanctions and participation of trade unions and NGOs.

- **National Plan against Forced Labor (2021)**

Approved in December 2021, it coordinates actions by multiple ministries to prevent, detect, investigate and sanction forced labor. In addition, it strengthens the role of the Labor Inspectorate and judicial bodies in the prosecution and protection of victims.

- **Labor and constitutional norms**

The Spanish Penal Code criminalizes forced labor, while the Constitution protects the dignity of labor and the fundamental rights of workers.

SUPPLIERS OF CUBAN MARABOU CHARCOAL IN SPAIN TO BE AUDITED BY THE EU

It is symptomatic that Spain is a major producer of charcoal of a much higher quality, oak charcoal. As an aggregate national reference, in 2023 Spanish charcoal production was 90,000 m³ ([MITECO](#)). The price of both products is similar in distribution, and it is incomprehensible to ship such a heavy product from such a remote

location, so the key to this market lies in the wide margin of the marketers, due to their low production costs and, consequently, the cost at source.

The marketing of lower-quality foreign charcoal from overseas not only harms Spanish industry, but is also carried out without consumers being aware of the production process, sometimes selling it with the label "organic," presumably violating the spirit of that designation.

Furthermore, Spain exported \$23 million of charcoal (HS 4402) in 2023,² mainly to **FRANCE, ITALY, GERMANY, THE NETHERLANDS** and **THE UNITED KINGDOM**. Given the low purchase and import costs, it is likely that this volume includes tons of Cuban marabou charcoal produced under slave labour by prisoners and convicts. **These countries also have a responsibility, now, of being aware of these issues and inspecting importers at their destination.**

These are some of the marketers of marabou charcoal in Spain:

- **Basa Vegetable Charcoal** (Belvis de la Jara, Toledo) / Basa Company (Basa Carbón Vegetal). Specialized in exporting and sale of marabu charcoal, based in Havana. [Basacompany.es](https://basacompany.es).
- **Carbones Otzarreta** (Gipuzkoa). Distributors in Gipuzkoa, focused on Cuban marabu charcoal. carbonesotzarreta.es.
- **Intenza Export S.L.** (A Coruña). Company dedicated to the import and distribution of marabu charcoal, which they call "ecological". intenzaexport.es.
- **PRALIPOINT**. Importer of marabu charcoal from Cuba. [More info](#).
- **Carbocan Internacional** (Dashe Group): Specialized in international trade of Cuban charcoal. carbocan.es.
- **Carbocoa SL**. Store with "marabu charcoal". carbocoa.com.
- **Norjor Logistics**. Distributors of marabu charcoal from Cuba. [Norjor Logistics](https://norjorlogistics.com).
- **Crisol Group**. Catalog with "Marabu charcoal". grupocrisol.com.
- **BarbecueWorld** / Cook in Wood (ES). [Barbecue World](https://barbecueworld.es).
- **Loira Charcoals** (Valencia). Importer and distributor in Valencia, specialized in premium marabou charcoal with large quantities in stock. B2B offer of "Marabu Charcoal". go4worldbusiness.com.
- **Inicia Trade**: wholesale distributors of food products and marabu charcoal from Cuba.
- **Globy**: wholesale supplier of 100% natural marabu charcoal, established in 2019, with focus on competitive pricing.
- **Ibecosol S.L.**: Madrid-based company supporting the production and export of Cuban charcoal, with investment contracts.
- **AGRITIERRA ONG**: suppliers in Guadassuar, Valencia, selling Cuban marabou charcoal.
- **Ricardo Teran SL**: distributors of "ecological" marabu charcoal from Cuba.
- **Leña y Carbón Ponç**: importers of Cuban marabu charcoal.
- **Sucarveg**: importers of large quantities of marabu charcoal.
- **Carbones Hiru**: distributors of marabu charcoal.
- **Grupo Crisol**: suppliers of marabu charcoal.
- **Carbó Girona**: distributors of 100% "ecological" marabu charcoal, "handmade" in Cuba.
- **Martin Diego**: suppliers of marabu charcoal.
- **Carboexpor S.L.**: sellers of briquettes and charcoal, including Cuban marabu.

PORTUGUESE LAW (SOME APPLICABLE LEGAL PRINCIPLES)

• Penal Code and Labor Code

The Penal Code criminalizes forced labor, human trafficking and slavery. The Labor Code establishes obligations to protect dignity, safety and fair labor conditions.

• Constitution and international conventions

The Constitution protects fundamental rights, and Portugal has ratified key conventions: ILO 29 (Forced Labor), ILO 105 (Abolition of Forced Labor), Palermo Protocol, and the European Convention on Human Rights.

² UN Comtrade series (via [TrendEconomy](https://www.trendeconomy.com)).

- **Labor inspection and administrative sanctions**

The Labor Conditions Authority can impose fines of up to €61,200 for labor violations, including exploitation or abusive conditions.

SUPPLIERS OF CUBAN MARABU CHARCOAL IN PORTUGAL TO BE AUDITED BY THE EU

These are some of the marabou charcoal traders in Portugal:

- **Recheio Cash & Carry** – product "Carvão Vegetal de Marabú". recheio.pt.
- **Carborem**. Distributors of marabu charcoal of Cuban origin: "Carvão Marabú (originário de Cuba)". [Carborem](https://carborem.com).
- **CarvoSintra** – trade of Cuban "carvão" marabu. [Facebook](https://facebook.com/carvosintra).
- **Dicarbo Portugal**. Importers and distributors of Cuban marabu charcoal. [Facebook](https://facebook.com/dicarboportugal).
- **Mercearia de Portugal Ava** – "UMI Marabu". merceariadeportugalava.shop.
- **Brasas Vivas**. Portuguese company specialized in marabu. [Europages](https://europages.com/brasas-vivas).
- **CARBOFEIRA** / Jaime Pinho Rodrigues & Filhos, Lda. (Santa Maria da Feira). Wholesaler. [Europages](https://europages.com/carbofeira).
- **Ecobrasa**: Charcoal suppliers.
- **Quebrarco-Carvão Lda**: Charcoal importers and distributors in the north of Portugal and Galicia.
- **CARBOFEIRA**: Cuba marabu charcoal distributors.
- **ImperGás**: Suppliers of charcoal, including Cuban marabu.
- **G Oliveira & C Santos LDA**: Wholesale suppliers of charcoal, including Cuban varieties.

ITALIAN LAW (SOME APPLICABLE LEGAL PRINCIPLES)

- **Legislative Decree 231/2001.**

Establishes administrative criminal liability of companies for crimes committed in their interest, including trafficking, exploitation and forced labor. Exoneration is possible if they adopt adequate organizational and compliance models (the "Modeli 231").

- **Law 199/2016 (anti-caporalization).**

Stiffens penalties for labor exploitation, especially in agriculture, and criminalizes illegal labor mediation practices. Art. 603-bis of the Criminal Code punishes exploitation (caporalato) with imprisonment and disqualification.

- **Preventive judicial administration**

Judges may impose judicial administration of a company if it facilitates, due to lack of controls, labor crimes. It has been applied in cases of exploitation in fashion chains.

- **Non-financial reporting (Legislative Decree 254/2016).**

Obliges large companies to report social and environmental risks, including human rights and due diligence issues.

CUBAN MARABOU CHARCOAL SUPPLIERS IN ITALY TO BE AUDITED BY THE EU

These are some of the marabou charcoal traders in Italy:

- **KamadoPro**. Distributors of Cuban marabu restoration charcoal. "Carbone di Marabù Cubano". kamadopro.it.
- **YAKINIKU** (IT, distributors). Suppliers of marabu charcoal. Range "Carbone di Marabù". yakinikugrill.com.
- **Peroni srl** (professional retail). Distributors of marabu charcoal "Carbone di Marabu". [Peroni srl](https://peroni.it).
- **BBQ Paradise**. "Charcoal Carbone Marabù". bbqparadise.it.
- **BBQ & Barbecue Store**. "Carbone vegetale Marabù". bbqbarbecuestore.it.
- **Bodei Carbone**. Suppliers of Cuban marabù charcoal. [Bodei Carbone](https://bodeicarbone.it).
- **Prisma Italia**. Ecological" marabù charcoal. [Prisma SRL](https://prisma.it).
- **Hendi** (distributor in Italy via horeca channel): "Marabù al carbone". [Popolo Hotellerie](https://popolohotellerie.it).
- **Grillstore.it**. Sells "MC Brikett carbonella Marabù". grillstore.it.
- **BBQ & Barbecue Store**: Importers of Cuban marabou "carbonella".

- **The King of Barbecue:** Distributors of Cuban marabou "legna" charcoal.
- **Best Charcoal (BBQParadise.it):** Producers and distributors of hand-selected marabou charcoal.
- **Peroni srl:** Distributors of marabu charcoal.
- **Centroleigno Di Lorenzo:** Charcoal imported from Cuba.

GREEK LAW (SOME APPLICABLE LEGAL PRINCIPLES)

- **Greek Constitution**
Prohibits all types of compulsory labor except for legal exceptions (as in wars) and guarantees social security and worker protection.
- **Greek Penal Code**
Article 323 criminalizes slave trade, understood as any form of trade in persons, including forced labor.

SUPPLIERS OF CUBAN MARABOU CHARCOAL IN GREECE TO BE AUDITED BY THE EU

These are some of the marabou charcoal traders in Greece:

- **Falelakis** ("Cuban Ember" brand). "Marabu Charcoal". falelakis.gr.
- **Mpogias Efthimios Vasileios.** Importers of Cuban marabou charcoal. "Cuban Marabu Charcoal (Tradewheel)". TradeWheel.
- **Briketes-Karvouna.gr.** "Κάρβουνα Κούβας (Καλέμι-Marabú)". briketes-karvouna.gr.
- **Bull Imports (Metamorfosi).** "Marabu Charcoal." business-yellowpages.com.
- **Mr PER® Charcoal:** Although based in Bulgaria, it acts as a direct importer of Cuban marabu charcoal and distributes in Greece, with production in Cuba.

TURKISH LAW (SOME APPLICABLE LEGAL PRINCIPLES)

- **Turkish Constitution.**
Art. 18 establishes the prohibition of forced labor, except under legally prescribed conditions (e.g. regulated prison labor). This makes it possible to challenge productions lacking equal legal guarantees.
- **Penal Code (art. 80)**
Criminalizes trafficking in persons for the purpose of labor exploitation (forced labor), with penalties of 10 to 15 years imprisonment. Applicable even if there is no physical sale or trafficking, and in cases of forced exploitation by the State or third parties.
- **Labor Law (Labour Law No. 4857)**
Prohibits child labor and forced labor, establishing worker protection procedures, although it does not have a specific focus on due diligence in supply chains.

CUBAN MARABU CHARCOAL SUPPLIERS TO BE AUDITED BY TURKEY

These are some of the marabu charcoal traders in Turkey:

- **Polet Kömür.** Distributors of "Küba Marabu nargile kömürü". polet.com.tr.
- **Akarçeşme Kömürcülük.** Importers of "Küba sıra kömürü" marabu ağacı "Küba (Marabu) kömürü" and "Küba nargile kömürü", import and distribution. Akarçeşme Kömürcülük.
- **Kemaliye Odun ve Kömür.** Distributors of "Küba mangal kömürü" in Istanbul. "Küba mangal kömürü". kemaliyekomur.com.tr.
- **Öz Kemaliye Kömürü.** "Küba mangal kömürü". ozkemaliyekomur.com.tr.
- **Mega Mangal Kömürü.** "Marabu Kömürü". megamangalkomuru.com.
- **VKM Sönmezler (Mersin).** Distributors of "Küba eleme naturel mangal kömürü" of marabu, "Küba Eleme (Marabu) mangal kömürü". vkmsönmezlermersin.com.
- **Tekno Kömür (TeknoGrillBBQ).** Mentions the "Küba Marabu briket kömür" on its official [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/teknogrillbbq) channel.
- **Marabu Charcoal** (brand, HQ in Turkey according to his channel). Exporter of marabu from Cuba. [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/marabucharcoal).
- **DOĞA GRUP KÖMÜRCÜLÜK A. Ş.:** Producers and importers of "kömür", including "Küba mangal kömürü".

- **ÇELİK MANGAL KÖMÜRÜ İNŞAAT GIDA PAZARLAMA VE TİCARET LİMİTED ŞİRKETİ:** Exporters and distributors of "mangal kömürü", including Cuban variants.
- **ERALAY:** Importers and producers of marabu "Küba mangal kömürü".
- **Korateş 35 Kömürcülük:** Wholesale and retail distributors of "Küba marabu kömürü" in Izmir.

CUBAN TOBACCO, ANOTHER PRODUCT PRODUCED USING SLAVE LABOR

The Republic of Cuba has a centuries-old tradition of artisanal tobacco production. This is a specialized production process that requires knowledge of how to handle the leaves and roll each cigar. At the beginning of our investigation, we thought it would be very unusual to find prisoners making Cuban cigars. The testimonies we collected proved that this was a mistake. In this production, **slave labor affects the Cuban tobacco and cigar industry, controlled by Tabacuba, in a mixed formula of specialized civilians and prisoners suffering forced labor.**

Let us use the following example, **although in the next section we will discuss the scope across the entire island.** In Quivicán, in the Aguacate prison, also known as the Quivicán Prison, there is a Tabacuba "Habanos" cigar factory **within the prison walls**, whose production is destined for export. This is replicated in other places; it is not exclusive to Quivicán. **Forty prisoners and two civilians work in the tobacco factory at Quivicán prison.** The two civilians, who are tobacco experts, teach the prisoners the basics of tobacco production and in addition take care of the factory's accounting.

The two civilian workers who are not serving prison sentences have jobs that are in line with the miserable working conditions endured by Cubans. They work five days a week. They start work at 7 a.m., Monday through Friday, and finish at 4:30 p.m., with a half-hour break between hours, along with a small snack and lunch provided by the prison. They receive a salary of around 40,000 Cuban pesos per month (about [\\$97 per month](#)). Each day, they are allowed to take two cigarettes home with them. This is another source of income for them. At the end of each month, in addition, they receive an additional bag of food to help with the nutrition of their families.

Note: The exchange rate on the domestic market for Cuban dollars [is around 410 pesos per dollar](#), as the government does not exchange pesos for dollars for citizens. The reason for showing prices in dollars is twofold: Cubans are paid in pesos, but the stores where they can buy essential household items and nutrition are owned by the Cuban army (the GAESA conglomerate), which only accepts payment in dollars or euros, forcing them to exchange currency on the informal market.

The situation is completely different for the 40 prisoners in Quivicán who work alongside these two civilians. The 40 prisoners who work in the tobacco factory at Quivicán prison **are taken from their cells and brought to the factory at 6:30 a.m. and returned at 9 or 10 p.m. every day of the week except Sunday, when they work until lunchtime. They have no break during the day and are not provided with the much-needed snack that the two civilian workers receive. Compared to the 40,000 Cuban pesos earned by civilians, prisoners receive 3,000 Cuban pesos, or \$7.32 per month.** We show the salary in dollars, at the internal Cuban dollar exchange rate, which is [around 410 pesos per dollar](#), since the government does not exchange pesos for dollars for citizens. There is a double meaning to showing it in dollars, since Cubans are paid in pesos, but the stores where they can buy essential products for their homes and nutrition are Cuban army stores (GAESA), which only accept payment in dollars or euros, forcing them to exchange currency on the informal market. That is the amount they are told to transfer to the prisoners' families, but they do not even receive that in their accounts. Without knowing why, families receive less than that amount, and sometimes nothing at all. That meager salary, if you can call it that, in addition, is not even paid by default. There are production targets. **Each prisoner must make between 50 and 130 cigars daily**, depending on the targets. Cigars produced that do not pass quality control for export are not counted as "made," but Tabacuba uses those cigars to sell on the domestic market.

Every time the inmates leave the workplace, the guards search them and confiscate even the smallest pieces of tobacco leaf in their possession. It is not a matter of stealing a cigar: a small piece of leftover tobacco leaf in their pocket means being beaten by the guards, being insulted, receiving other various and cruel disciplinary punishments, and losing their "job," returning to a closed regime under conditions of maximum rigor. The consequence is that there are no complaints. **Prisoners accept these miserable conditions of slavery in order to avoid remaining behind bars day after day in deplorable conditions.**

Table 5: Annual export figures for Cuban cigars (HS 240210, [WITS/UN Comtrade](#)) and price per unit

Country	Year	Value (USD)	Quantity (kg)	USD/kg	USD/cigar (≈12 g)	USD/box of 25
EU (27)	2023	85,240,000	335,403	254.13	3.05	76.24

Germany	2023	47,694,460	139,724	341.35	4.10	102.40
Switzerland	2023	42,543,120	53,744	791.59	9.50	237.48
Spain	2023	33,707,660	193,665	174.05	2.09	52.22
Belgium	2023	10,708,120	29,211	366.58	4.40	109.97
United Kingdom	2023	10,665,050	22,905	465.62	5.59	139.69
Japan	2023	5,715,090	7,389	773.46	9.28	232.04
Italy	2023	5,276,420	13,273	397.69	4.77	119.31
Canada	2023	5,275,550	43,356	121.68	1.46	36.50
Australia	2023	4,722,610	7,112	664.00	7.97	199.20
Portugal	2023	2,675,650	8,538	313.38	3.76	94.01
Norway	2023	1,109,070	2,667	415.85	4.99	124.75
France	2023	679,940	2,262	300.63	3.61	90.19
South Korea	2023	540,620	509	1,062.12	12.75	318.64

If, instead of taking the average production as 90 cigars per day per prisoner subjected to forced labor, we take a more conservative measure, that is, 75 cigars per day, **the average remuneration received by the prisoner for the production of each cigar is 3.25 thousandths of a dollar**, for a monthly production of 2,250 cigars per month. If Cuban cigars are sold by the Cuban government at an average price of \$3.05 in their largest market, the European Union, **the gross margin for the Cuban government for each cigar exported is 99.67%**. Upon arrival in Europe, **European consumers pay an average of €17.90 per cigar, or \$21.00 per cigar**. In other words, with respect to the retail price, **the gross margin for European distributors is 85.47%, for the Cuban government it is 14.53%, and for prisoners it is 0.015%**.

Table 6: Margins on exports and on the retail price at destination

Country	USD per imported cigar	Government margin (export)	Retail price (€ per cigar)	Government gross margin (retail price)	Importers' gross margin	Remuneration to producers under slavery
EU (27)	3.05 USD	99.67	21	14.53	85.47	3.25 thousandths of a dollar

In particular, the Cuban cigar factory for export at Quivicán prison **was set up a year ago**. Prison and regional authorities told prisoners that they would work five days a week, eight-hour shifts with half-hour breaks and a snack. In other words, the conditions of unsanctioned civilian workers. And so it is with the wonderful worthless contracts that were drawn up to hide the real situation of the prisoners, because they are not complied with in any way.

The culture of Cuban tobacco and rum production, the best in the world, is a world heritage site. We must protect it, and the regime itself is destroying that heritage, turning it into slavery, diminishing quality, and perpetrating global consumer deception by producing these goods through slavery. In addition to the abominable scourge of slave labor, it is also painful that such a distinctive, specific, and unique culture is managed by a slave-owning government that destroys everything in sight in Cuba.

CUBAN CIGAR PRODUCTION IN PRISONS VS. TOTAL

In addition to the already documented **cigar** factory in Quivicán prison (also known as Aguacate prison), **we have concrete first-hand confirmation of many additional prisons** where hundreds of prisoners are being subjected to forced labor to produce Cuban cigars for international export. These work centers within maximum-security prisons would be in addition to work centers in other detention centers, in addition to the thousands of criminal offenders who, serving correctional labor without incarceration, work in additional work centers in **Tabacuba**.

We are talking about a forced labor workforce of **thousands of people across the island**.

We have also verified that the brands affected include **Cohiba** and **Mareva**, both produced in the Boniato prison, so it is logical to assume that all or most Cuban cigar brands are being affected.

Examples of audited prisons where this abominable practice is taking place:

- **Quivicán maximum security prison** in Mayabeque. We have explained the working conditions and remuneration in the previous section. The factory is located within the prison walls. There are **40 inmates** performing this forced labor. The minimum target for each prisoner is **60 cigars per day. If they do not meet export quality standards or fail to meet the daily target, they receive no wages.** Cigars that do not pass the subjective quality level for export are not remunerated, but the government does sell them on the domestic market.
- **A forced labor prison called El Pre de Angola**, in Artemisa, has 500 inmates, **70** of whom **are assigned to the production of Cuban Havana cigars.** The authorities require a minimum of **70** export-quality **Havana cigars to be produced per day** by each inmate. If they fail to meet this quota, they receive no wages and are denied home passes and prison benefits. Cigars that do not meet the subjective quality standards for export are not remunerated, but the government sells them on the Cuban domestic market.
- **El Yayal Prison - Cuba Sí**, in Mayarí, Holguín. Inside the prison, on the third floor, there is a cigar factory where approximately **50 prisoners** work. Conditions are similar to those at Quivicán Prison and El Pre de Angola Forced Labor Prison. The targets are similar, around **a minimum of 75 Havana cigars per day.**
- **Boniato maximum security prison**, in Santiago de Cuba. In a prison warehouse located opposite the Minint workshop, there are three rooms with a capacity for **100 inmates**, where at least the **Cohiba Robusto** and **Mareva** cigar brands are produced. The daily target is set at **75 Mareva or 75 Cohiba Robusto cigars per day.** If they fail to meet this target, not only do they not receive a salary, but in addition, we have confirmed that in this prison they are denied home passes to see their families. When they meet the target, they are paid amounts similar to those in other prisons **per month, but only if they meet the daily targets of 75 Mareva or Cohiba Robusto cigars.** There are three instructors in the prison who control production.
- **Combinado del Este Prison** in Havana—specifically in the building known as "El Combinadito," where **100 prisoners** make Havana cigars under the same conditions as in other prisons.
- **Guamajal Prison**, in Villa Clara. Conditions are similar to the rest, with a minimum daily target of 60 export-quality cigars. **Seventy-five inmates** perform this work. They are paid less than **80 Cuban pesos (two thousandths of a dollar)** for each export-quality cigar produced, but once they reach the minimum target, they earn a little more for each cigar produced.
- **Las Mangas Prison**, in Bayamo, Granma. This prison has **1,348 inmates** and a minimum security settlement ("El Molino") adjacent to the prison, which has **53 inmates**. There are five detachments in the prison, three for those awaiting trial and two for those who have been sentenced. Among the prisoners, there are 68 minors (25 awaiting trial and 43 serving sentences). There are dozens of political prisoners, among whom more than a dozen refuse to appear in political prisoner registries. The prisoners who make cigars are common prisoners, and there are around **70 of them.**

As in these cases, dozens of long-term prisoners who have been through numerous prisons across the island have confirmed to us that **all the largest maximum-security provincial prisons are associated with cigar production, as are numerous forced labor prisons throughout the island.** If we make a calculation based only on the prisons we have audited, where we have more information, and compare it with annual cigar purchases in countries such as the **EU, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, and South Korea**, for which we have already shown data, we obtain the following tables:

Table 7: Production of Havana cigars through forced labor in seven prisons in Cuba

	Province	Type	Prisoners	Production	Total annual production (cigars) ³
Quivicán	Mayabeque	Rigor	40	75 cigars per inmate per day	924,480 cigarettes/year
El Pre de Angola	Artemisa	Less strict	70		1,617,840 cigars/year
Cuba Yes	Holguín	Rigor	50		1,155,600 cigars/year
Sweet potato	Sant. de Cuba	Rigor	100		2,311,200 cigars/year
Combined Eastern	Havana	Rigor	100		2,311,200 cigars/year
Guamajal	Villa Clara	Rigor	75		1,733,400 cigars/year

³ This is a statement based on six days a week (in many cases, inmates also work half a day on Sundays), 4.28 weeks per month, and 12 months per year, all multiplied by the minimum average daily production per inmate and the number of inmates making Cuban Havana cigars.

Las Mangas	Granma	Rigor	70		1,617,840 cigars/year
				TOTAL	11,671,560 cigars/year

In 2024, Canada imported 3,219,000 Havana cigars from Cuba, according to data from Canadian International Merchandise Trade.⁴ The production indicated, from those seven factories alone, is **3.63 times the annual production that Canada imported in 2024.**

According to [Tobacco Journal International](#), Habanos S.A. reported total worldwide sales of Cuban cigars worth **\$721 million** for 2023, **and Reuters confirmed that total worldwide sales were \$827 million in 2024, with the headline "Cuba's leading cigar maker breaks record with sales of \$827 million in 2024."** If we find the average price of an average 12-gram cigar in the **EU (27), Canada, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, and South Korea** from Table 5, we can obtain the total weighted average price, taking into account the weighting of sales in each country:

Table 8: Average price of cigars in dollars in eight significant and different markets

Country	Value (USD)	USD/cigar (≈12 g)
EU (27)	85,240,000	3.05
Switzerland	42,543,120	9.50
United Kingdom	10,665,050	5.59
Japan	5,715,090	9.28
Canada	5,275,550	1.46
Australia	4,722,610	7.97
Norway	1,109,070	4.99
South Korea	540620	12.75
WEIGHTED AVERAGE PRICE:		5.36 USD

According to data from Habanos S.A. in 2024 [released by Reuters](#), therefore, with an estimated average price of **\$5.36 per cigar**, it would have sold a total of **154.4 million cigars**.

In other words, **in the seven prisons audited as examples alone, mere examples with all the variables explained above, production would account for 7.56% of Cuba's total annual national production.**

Knowing that Cuba has **242 prisons**, and knowing that **these seven prisons are merely examples of actual production centers, the production of Havana cigars by prisoners could be greater than that of artisans in the brands' own factories**, and this would be the reason why Reuters referred to a historic "record" in its headline.

We can assure you that **Cuba produces a very high percentage of its annual production of Havana cigars through forced labor in prisons and "correctional" work centers**, and that production includes all the best-known and most revered brands, such as **its flagship brand Cohiba, which Fidel Castro smoked.**

The Havana cigar industry, like the charcoal industry, is therefore completely engulfed by slave labor. Forced labor in the Cuban prison tobacco industry is therefore not an isolated practice, but part of a structured and widespread economic model that has been part of the Cuban prison system since time immemorial. The production of these cigars is destined for export to the global market (Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, the whole of Europe, and the five continents), which exacerbates the international responsibility of the Cuban regime for using slave labor as the basis of a strategic industry that is sold to the whole world as "artisanal."

⁴ Imports from Cuba of hand-rolled cigars (HS 2402.10.00.10) in 2024, in dollars and units. Data from the Canadian International Merchandise Trade web application: [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/2021004/imp-eng.htm?r1=\(1\)&r2=848&r3=0&r4=2402100010&r5=0&r7=1&r8=2024-01-01&r9=2024-12-01](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/2021004/imp-eng.htm?r1=(1)&r2=848&r3=0&r4=2402100010&r5=0&r7=1&r8=2024-01-01&r9=2024-12-01)

FORCED LABOR ACTIVITIES AMONG POLITICAL PRISONERS

Through extensive interviews and formal statements taken from the victims, we were able to verify how State Security, with the aim of occultation of this production system, usually prevents political prisoners from carrying out activities related to charcoal, given that the conditions are the most atrocious, sordid and abominable of all forced labor activities in prisons, with the consequent risk of political prisoners reporting them as was managed to do [in 2016 by UNPACU in a video on how charcoal is worked and the aberrant conditions with which prisoners work](#) (without proper tools to cut wood, without mattresses, sleeping in the jungle, drinking from troughs where cows drink because they are not provided with running water or electricity, being paid between **34 and 62 cents per ton produced**, and a host of inhumane conditions as described in this complaint report), as well as in the very hard work of the zafra (the cutting of sugarcane). In addition, **the charcoal thus produced is a product destined entirely for export** (mainly to **EUROPE**, with **SPAIN, PORTUGAL, GREECE, ITALY** and **TURKEY**, in that order, at the head of this criminal market against humanity), and with an annual growth of 200%, as we have evidenced. In order to prevent political prisoners - more active and less ideologically docile than the common ones - from denouncing this barbarism, they are mostly assigned to agricultural production (carried out in equally deplorable conditions), garbage collection, street cleaning and work in other State institutions.

Table 9: most common forced labor activities among common prisoners

Activity	Political prisoners (53 declarants)* Agricultural production
Agricultural production s	26
Garbage collection	19
Street cleaning	17
Work for state institutions	13
Others (construction, factories, raw materials, etc.)	4
Marabu charcoal production	3
Sugar cane cutting (zafra)	2**

(*) Some of the affiants worked in several areas during their internment.

(**) In the untabulated interviews, testimony was taken from 20 more common prisoners who were subjected to charcoal work. Fear of repression was the reason why their statements were not put in writing.

DOCUMENTED PATTERNS OF FORCED LABOR VIOLATIONS

From the analysis of the 53 testimonies collected, multiple systematic patterns of human rights violations associated with forced labor imposed in Cuban prisons were identified. **These patterns are neither isolated nor exceptional events, but rather repeated manifestations of an institutionalized practice that directly affects political prisoners.** The following is an exposition of the main axes of violation grouped into thematic categories - structural, physical, labor, economic and repressive - supported by documents, figures, qualitative and quantitative descriptions, and representative testimonies, which make it possible to demonstrate the seriousness and extent of the phenomenon.

Based on these findings, and as we have been describing, it is shown that the documented practices not only contravene Cuban labor and prison legislation, but also constitute flagrant violations of international human rights law, including instruments ratified by the Cuban State such as the International Covenants on Human Rights, the ILO Conventions, and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. **All this makes it possible to qualify the practices described as contemporary forms of slavery, coercion and cruel or inhuman treatment, with an aggravated dimension when the victims are markedly vulnerable groups, such as political prisoners.**

The following is a legal analysis of each of these patterns, in light of the normative instruments invoked in this complaint report:

PERCENTAGE RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMATIC VIOLATIONS

The following table illustrates the conditions under which inmates are forced to work, and the enormous array of rights violations they suffer:

Table 10: structural and systematic violations, affected reporters, and percentage of these in the sample.

TYPE OF ABUSE/VIOLATION	SUFFERED THESE VIOLATIONS
Personal threats	100,00% (53)
Threats to the family	73,58% (39)
Physical violence while working	45,28% (24)
Work with incompatible illnesses	94,34% (50)
Worsening health condition	81,13% (43)
No labor protection	100,00% (53)
No training, tools or working tools	98,11% (52)
Abusive working hours	92,45% (49)
Subjected to risks due to external conditions (weather, pests, etc.)	96,23% (51)
No labor contract	69,81% (37)
Without salary or with a symbolic salary	81,13% (43)
Arbitrary salary deductions (only for those with assigned salary)	71.43% (25 of 35)
No proof of payments (on those who had any salary)	100.00% (35 out of 35)
Retaliation for refusing to work	100,00% (53)
Sexual harassment or violence (women only)	50,00% (4)
Afro-Cubans	64,15% (34)

In the following sections, we will describe and give more details of these violations, based on the responses to 53 items in the declaration form used for this study.

1. Imposition of forced labor without voluntariness

The imposition of tasks without the free and voluntary consent of the prisoner constitutes a direct violation of [Article 2.1 of ILO Convention 29](#), which defines forced labor as "any work or service exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily". **100% of the 53 demonstrators state categorically that forced labor was imposed against the prisoner's will. In addition, all of the declarants (53, 100%) suffered personal threats** to coerce them to continue with forced labor. **39 of the 53 (73.58%) suffered threats to their family** to coerce the prisoner to continue with forced labor. And **32 of the 53 (60.38%) suffered criminal reprisals** (revocation to maximum rigor prisons, disciplinary punishments, etc.) if they complained about this slave labor scheme. Even in **24 of the 53 testimonies analyzed (45.28%), prisoners reported having suffered physical aggression** by prison staff in contexts related to forced labor. In summary, **all of the declarants (53, 100%) suffered either personal threats, threats to family, reprisals or physical violence to force them to continue working in slave-like conditions.**

The absence of voluntariness and the existence of institutionalized coercion is evident. The evidence that 100% of the prisoners were forced to work under the threat of forced labor according to the ILO and violations of freedom of choice of work: the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) (art. 8.3) contains the prohibition of forced or compulsory labor, [ILO Convention 29](#) (art. 2.1) prohibits all work imposed under threat and without consent, [ILO Convention 105](#) (art. 1) expressly prohibits all work imposed under threat and without consent, and [ILO Convention 105](#) (art. 1) expressly prohibits forced labor. 1) expressly prohibits forced labor as a means of political coercion, the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (art. 23.1) grants the right to freely chosen work, the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 6.2) also expressly prohibits forced labor,

and the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 97) provide that prison labor should not be imposed as a punishment or in conditions that affect human dignity.

2. Absence of an employment contract

The non-existence of contracts in 37 of the 53 cases (69.81% of the declarants) denies all legal protection to inmates and constitutes a direct violation of international regulations: the [Cuban Labor Code](#) (Law 116/2013, art. 20) obliges to formalize in writing the labor relationship even for inmates, the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - ICESCR](#) - (art. 7) guarantees the right to fair and satisfactory conditions of work, the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 26) recognizes the right to the progressive development of labor rights, and the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 97) determine that prison labor cannot be punitive or degrading, so that the omission of contracts implies absolute legal defenselessness and a structural breach of these obligations.

3. Work as mandatory criminal punishment

Testimonies reveal that work was part of the penal sanction. Without alternatives such as study or rehabilitation, **this automatic imposition ignores the principle of voluntariness and turns work into a form of extended criminal punishment.** When work is imposed as part of the penalty, without alternatives such as education or rehabilitation, it constitutes a violation of multiple international instruments: the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) (art. 8.3.a) prohibits forced labor imposed as a penalty, the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 97) expressly prohibit the use of forced labor as a punishment, [ILO Convention 105](#) (art. 1.b and 1.c) prohibits the use of forced labor as a disciplinary or political education measure, and the [Cuban Constitution](#) (art. 60) alludes to social reintegration but in practice it is not complied with.

VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND INTEGRITY

4. Physical violence while working

In **24 of the 53 testimonies analyzed (45.28%)**, the prisoners reported having suffered physical aggression by prison staff in contexts related to forced labor. On the other hand, **32 of the 53 (60.78%) suffered concrete criminal reprisals** (revocation to maximum rigor prisons, disciplinary punishments such as isolation and/or segregation from the rest of the prisoners, etc.) in the face of any complaint against this slave labor scheme. In summary, **all of the declarants (53) suffered either personal threats, threats to family, reprisals or physical violence to force them to continue working in slave labor conditions.** These acts constitute serious violations of the prohibition of cruel treatment: the [Convention against Torture](#) (arts. 1 and 16) prohibits any inhuman or degrading treatment, the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - ICCPR](#) - (art. 7) enshrines the same prohibition, and the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 5) recognizes the right to personal integrity.

5. Obligation to work in spite of adverse medical conditions

It is well known the very poor situation of the prisons in Cuba. Before performing forced labor, most of the prisoners had to spend months or years in subhuman conditions in the prisons of maximum rigor, so that their physical condition at the beginning of the very hard work (agriculture, marabu, construction, etc.) was already severely affected. **94.34% of the prisoners (50 out of 53) were forced to work with chronic illnesses or injuries incompatible with the assigned jobs, including asthma, hypertension, muscular disorders, HIV and other significant medical conditions.** This practice violates the right to physical and mental health and contradicts the principle of matching work to the individual's capabilities. **In addition, 81.13% of the testimonies (43) report severe deterioration of their health associated with such work, such as injuries without medical attention, malnutrition, hypertension, severe spinal conditions, fainting, skin infections and the appearance or aggravation of disorders such as anxiety or insomnia. Of these 43, 90.70% (39) stated that the authorities did not offer them medical assistance** in these situations, nor did they adapt their work to their medical conditions.

In many cases, **the physical deterioration was so severe that the prisoners reported partial loss of mobility, nervous breakdowns or episodes of mental disorientation as a direct consequence of extreme physical exertion, lack of nutrition and total lack of rest.** These are some of the testimonies in this regard:

- "Major spinal problems" (B.B., 17 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "I caught tuberculosis, a highly contagious and deadly lung disease" (M.H., 37 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "More frequent migraine attacks due to exposure to the sun" (M.Z., 19 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Gastric fluid spilled into his stomach and he lost his vision for a day" (F.C., 29 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Spinal pain, cervical pain, numb hands" (D.L., 33 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Hypertension" (A.A., 23 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Hand injuries from picking up garbage without proper protection. Needed subsequent surgery on two occasions and compressed cervical vertebrae from torture in detention centers and forced labor prison" (I.A., 44 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Affected his kidneys and spine" (G.G., 42 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Bilateral osteochondritis. Hypothyroidism" (K.V., 42 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Chronic asthma, very aggravated" (Y.R., 24 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Spine and joint pains" (C.C., 27 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Asthma" (Y.M., 27 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Pains in the spine" (A.L., 27 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "I got more skin conditions" (E.M., 27 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Epicondylitis" (Y.C., 27 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Lumbago" (Y.G., 28 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Pain in the spine and kidneys" (E.P., 28 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "The kidney had serious consequences to the point that I could not do any kind of activity" (Y.V., 34 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Yes, all my chronic or prison-acquired conditions worsened" (J.S., 34 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Post-traumatic stress, hair loss, and loss of sleep" (O.A., 34 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "All my illnesses worsened" (L.H., 34 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Yes, all my chronic or prison-acquired conditions worsened" (L.A., 34 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Serious spinal conditions" (R.V., 35 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Generalized anxiety. Personality disorder. Generalized stress. Chronic insomnia" (J.G., 35 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Psychiatrists and Neurologists subsequently indicated increasing all medications for my ailments" (J.G., 36 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Pains in the spine" (R.B., 37 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Now I am suffering, in addition to HIV, from respiratory problems" (M.H., 37 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Sprained left foot" (D.G., 38 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Constant muscle aches" (G.P., 40 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "High blood pressure" (Y.O., 40 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "High blood pressure" (M.A., 41 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Gradually increased scoliosis and painful processes due to deviation in the spine" (N.H., 42 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "It greatly increased the deviation of the spine." (R.L., 45 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Arthrosis, migraine and bursitis" (T.G., 46 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Muscle and joint pains" (A.R., 48 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "He had a serious problem with the hip and a knee" (J.S., 49 years old, peaceful demonstrator)
- "Due to psychological mistreatment situations, presented serious problems with blood pressure" (J.J., 51 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "Blood pressure problems and loss of teeth" (N.L., 53 years old, peaceful demonstrator).
- "I also suffer from nerves and was constantly decompensated" (T.E., 54 years old, peaceful demonstrator).

- "The food was not suitable for stomach ulcers, and I paid for the consequences"(F.A., 65 years old, peaceful demonstrator).

These conditions are in breach of [Articles 126 and 127 of the Cuban Labor Code](#), whose letter obliges the employer to guarantee safe working environments, and constitute a violation of the right to health and of the principle of human dignity: the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)- ICESCR- (art. 12) recognizes the right to the highest standard of physical and mental health, the [Mandela Rules](#) (arts. 24-27) oblige the provision of medical care to persons deprived of liberty, and the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 5.1) imposes on States the duty to guarantee the physical integrity of detainees.

6. Absence of labor protection measures

96.23% of those interviewed (51 of them) indicated that **they worked without adequate tools, gloves, boots, masks or the minimum safety equipment**. Rudimentary, rusty or improvised tools were used, not infrequently provided by relatives of the prisoner, and excessive weights were carried without mechanical means.

To the question "were you provided with adequate nutrition, water and care to strengthen your health at work?", only 6 of the 53 (11.32%) answered in the affirmative, and most of these 6 worked in state social institutions, garbage collection and other industrial processes. However, among those who work in agriculture, charcoal or sugar cane, practically 100% suffer from lack of water, food and adequate care to strengthen their health.

The lack of gloves, boots, masks and minimum safety conditions constitutes a clear violation of national and international regulations: the [Cuban Labor Code](#) (arts. 126 and 127) requires ensuring safety and hygiene at work, the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 98) impose the obligation to provide adequate equipment, and [ILO Convention No. 155](#) (art. 4) establishes the state's obligation to ensure a safe working environment.

VIOLATIONS OF WORKING CONDITIONS AND LABOR EXPLOITATION

7. Assignment of tasks without prior education or training

98.11% of those interviewed (52 out of 53) stated that they had not received any type of course, technical training or training for the tasks assigned. The imposition of dangerous or specialized tasks without prior education or training constitutes a violation of international occupational safety standards and the right to dignity at work: [ILO Convention No. 155](#) (art. 14) requires that workers receive sufficient instruction in safety and hygiene, the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) - ICESCR - (art. 7.b) guarantees safe and healthy working conditions, the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 98 and 99) provide that prison work must be oriented towards training and reintegration, and the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 5.2) protects personal integrity, which is compromised when forced to perform work without adequate preparation.

8. Exposure to extreme weather conditions

47 of the 53 testimonies (88.68%) refer to having worked exposed to adverse weather conditions without any protection, including full days under the scorching sun, intense humidity or constant rain, without access to shelter, sun protection or drinking water. **45 of the 53 respondents (84.91%) had no protection against other external risk factors** (fumes, dirt, etc.). **49 of the 53 respondents were not provided with protection against pests and biological hazards** (mosquitoes, bites, pests, animals, noxious plants, etc.). In short, **100% of the 53 demonstrators reported these basic deficiencies in occupational health and safety. In the prisons and forced labor farms for charcoal production, the inmates even slept outdoors, without shelter or minimum conditions of protection**. This prolonged exposure constitutes a form of inhumane treatment, especially when imposed in combination with excessive working hours, lack of rest, malnutrition and pre-existing illnesses.

Forcing inmates to work under extreme climatic conditions, such as excessive heat, direct exposure to the sun or under heavy rain, without adequate protective measures, contravenes [Article 126 of the Cuban Labor](#)

[Code](#), which obliges to ensure safe and healthy conditions and violates the prohibition of cruel and inhuman treatment and the right to safe working conditions: the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - ICESCR](#) - (art. 7.b) recognizes the right to safe and healthy working conditions, [ILO Convention No. 155](#) (art. 4) obliges the State to guarantee protection against risks related to the work environment, the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 13 and 18), which prohibit subjecting prisoners to environments that are degrading or dangerous for their physical and mental integrity and establish that prisoners must be housed and protected from harmful environmental conditions, and the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 5.1) imposes the duty to guarantee the physical integrity of persons deprived of their liberty.

9. Abusive working hours

In these conditions 92.45% of those interviewed (49) reported having worked more than 40 hours per week, and the average number of hours worked per day among those interviewed was 9.84 hours of work per day, at a rate of 6.37 days/week. Respondents worked **an average of more than 63 hours per week.** Likewise, **26.42% of the respondents (14 of them) stated that there was no break during the entire workday,** not even for a few minutes. Of course, none of the declarants had any vacation, since this concept is not used in forced or correctional prison labor.

[Article 74.A of the Cuban Labor Code](#) establishes a maximum workday of 8 hours for ordinary work, which is blatantly violated with the prisoners. The omission of breaks, rest days and vacations also violates the following ILO labor principles: Articles 2(1), 2(2)(c), 11 and 12 of ILO Convention 29 (Convention on Forced or Compulsory Labor); Articles 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) of ILO Convention 105 (Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labor); [ILO Convention No. 1](#) (art. 2) establishes a maximum of eight hours a day, [ILO Convention No. 14](#) (art. 2) recognizes the right to weekly rest, [ILO Convention No. 52](#) (arts. 2 and 3) regulates paid annual leave, and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - ICESCR](#) - (art. 7.d) enshrines the right to rest and to a reasonable limitation of working hours.

ECONOMIC VIOLATIONS

10. Lack of payment or symbolic salary

81.13%, 43 of the affiants, did not even receive a salary as such: 35 were allegedly assigned a salary, but **18 were not assigned any salary remuneration at all** (33.96% of the 53), **25 were withheld with the excuse of using such withholding to pay for work tools, work clothes, food and/or water** (71.43% of the 35 who were assigned an alleged salary), **and for 9 of the affiants the amount was only symbolic** (less than \$4 per month, 47.37% of the 35 who were assigned an alleged salary). **If the amount to determine the symbolic salary had been set at \$15 per month, none of them could have been considered remunerated.** This would have been logical, but in Cuba a large part of the population earns less than \$15 per month, despite the fact that these salaries do not allow subsistence in Cuba.

These practices violate [Article 42 of the Cuban Constitution](#), which recognizes the right to fair remuneration for work performed. The fact that the vast majority of prisoners did not receive remuneration or that it was symbolic, less than \$4 per month, constitutes a violation of the right to fair remuneration in international legislation as well: the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#) (art. 7.a) guarantees this right, the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 103) require fair remuneration for prison work, and the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 26) obliges the progressive development of economic rights.

11. Arbitrary deduction of wages for basic supplies

Of the 19 who declared that they actually received a salary (64.15%, including 9 of them who received less than 4 dollars a month), 17 of them (89.47%) reported additional deductions from the already meager "remuneration", justified by the officials for the use or rental of the tools necessary for the work (13 of them) or for the food, water or supplies necessary for the work (14 of them). We recall that the inmate can in no way pay for the elements necessary for the work. The lack of justification, and the refusal of the authorities to provide documentary proof of these "transactions" could constitute a form of undeclared theft

by the prison authorities of the miserable or non-existent salaries of the inmates, indicating an institutionalization of repression and prison corruption.

The discounts applied to the meager salaries of inmates, under pretexts such as payment for food or tools, constitute institutionalized theft: the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - ICESCR](#) - (art. 7.b) prohibits unjust deductions, and [ILO Convention No. 95](#) (art. 8) establishes the prohibition of arbitrary deductions from salaries.

12. Lack of transparency or recording of payments

100% of the 35 interviewees who were assigned a salary (including the 19 who stated that they actually received a salary) stated that they **were not given pay stubs, nor were they informed about salary conditions**, in violation of principles of transparency and accountability.

The absence of verifiable records on payments, wages and deductions in prison labor is a violation of the right to protection against labor fraud and transparency in the employment relationship: [ILO Convention No. 95](#) (art. 14) obliges to keep accessible and transparent records of wages, the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - ICESCR](#) - (art. 7.a and b) guarantees the right to fair remuneration and protection against arbitrary deductions, and the [Mandela Rules](#) (art. 96) indicate that the authorities must keep complete records of the working conditions of prisoners.

COERCION, REPRESSION AND PUNISHMENT

13. Retaliation for refusing to work

100% of the respondents (53) have received threats or reprisals for refusing to work, through **personal threats (100.00%)**, **threats to their families (73.58%)** or the **fabrication of disciplinary infractions (60.38%)**, with direct reprisals on their prison rights. All of this constitutes a structured and systemic policy of state coerciveness.

This conduct not only violates the principle of human dignity ([art. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)). In addition, the threats, disciplinary punishments and reprisals suffered by the prisoners who refused to work constitute flagrant violations of the prohibition of cruel treatment: the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) (art. 7) and the [Convention against Torture](#) (art. 16) prohibit degrading punishments, while the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (art. 5.2) enshrines the obligation to protect the dignity of persons deprived of their liberty.

14. Fabrication of disciplinary infractions

32 of the 53 testimonies (60.38%) report that they suffered sanctions for "labor indiscipline", which were applied for no real reason and only as retaliation for complaints expressed by the prisoner about work or for "poor performance" at work.

The documented practice of fabricating disciplinary infractions against inmates who refused to work or protested conditions constitutes a form of coercion incompatible with international guarantees of due process and protection against arbitrary sanctions: the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - ICCPR](#) - (art. 14.1 and 15) enshrines the right to a fair trial and not to be punished without legal basis, the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (arts. 8 and 9) establishes similar guarantees in the inter-American sphere, the [Mandela Rules](#) (arts. 36 and 37) regulate that any disciplinary sanction must be in accordance with the law and proportional, and [ILO Convention 105](#) (art. 1.c) prohibits the use of forced labor as a method of disciplinary coercion or reprisal.

PATTERNS OF REPRESSION OF MEN AND WOMEN

Analysis of the female and male subgroups reveals specific patterns of abuse and violations. In the female segment, the eight women interviewed (15.09% of the total) were forced to work **despite having serious**

illnesses or medical conditions incompatible with physical activity. Among the ailments reported are hypertension, diabetes, HIV, chronic migraine, bronchiectasis, rheumatism, and osteoarticular injuries such as epicondylitis. This group also stands out for the **high level of sexual harassment and violence** (50% of them suffer from it). Similarly, there are cases of **people in advanced stages of pregnancy who are forced to work**. These impositions violate multiple rights and make the State responsible for serious violations of those rights.

In the case of the male subgroup, the most notable aspects of their work performance are **the physical violence** against them, **the environmental risks to which they are subjected**, and the **absence of written wages and conditions for the work to be performed**. The following table shows the percentages of systematic violations of rights in this group.

Table 11: Structural and systematic violations of victims (women and men)

TYPE OF ABUSE/VIOLATION	Men	Women	Difference
Personal threats	100,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %
Threats to family	73,33 %	75,00 %	1,67 %
Physical violence while working	46,67 %	37,50 %	-9,17 %
Working with incompatible illnesses	93,33 %	100,00 %	6,67 %
Deterioration in health status	80,00 %	87,50 %	7,50 %
No job protection	100,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %
No training, tools, or work equipment	97,78 %	100,00 %	2,22 %
Abusive working hours	91,11 %	100,00 %	8,89 %
Subject to risks from external conditions (weather, pests, etc.)	100,00 %	75,00 %	-25,00 %
No employment contract	73,33 %	50,00 %	-23,33 %
No salary or symbolic salary	95,56 %	62,50 %	-33,06 %
Arbitrary salary deductions	78,57 %	100,00 %	21,43 %
No record of payments (for those who had some salary)	53,33 %	40,00 %	-13,33 %
Reprisals for refusing to work	100,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %
Sexual harassment or violence (women only)		50,00 %	

The interviewees were forced to perform physically strenuous work that was not adapted to their physical condition or reasonable physical condition, such as handling heavy loads, collecting waste, or performing agricultural work without adequate tools. Seven **of the eight women (87.50%) described being forced to perform tasks stated to be** degrading—such as manually removing excrement without gloves—which constitutes an additional form of institutional violence.

In terms of sexual violence, **three women (37.50%) demonstrated having been victims of harassment by other inmates, while two (25%) lodged a complaint of sexual harassment by prison officials**.

One of the women (Y.M.) described being **the VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN PRISON**, without the facts being investigated or medical or psychological care being offered.

The lack of effective protection against sexual harassment or violence constitutes a serious form of state negligence, contrary to the duty of care towards women deprived of their liberty.

Another inmate stated that she had to perform forced labor while pregnant and in an advanced stage of pregnancy.

In addition to the issue of sexual violence and the risk of forced labor for pregnant women, women and men are treated differently, even though both suffer serious violations of their rights that put their lives and physical and mental integrity at risk. Women are clearly more repressed in terms of **threats to their families** (to which they are particularly sensitive), with the imposition of **abusive working hours, harassment, and sexual violence**, while in other areas it is men who suffer particular repression, such as **physical violence** or exposure to **environmental risks**, which result from the tasks assigned to them.

The practices described constitute flagrant violations of international human rights law and international labor law. The imposition of **forced labor in medically unsuitable conditions** on both men and women, and especially on pregnant women, contravenes **Article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** and **ILO Conventions Nos. 29 and 105 on forced labor**. **Sexual harassment and violence, including rape in prisons**, violate **Article 7 of the ICCPR**, **Article 3 of the Convention against Torture**, and **Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**. The **lack of labor protection, exposure to environmental hazards, and physical violence** violate **Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** (safe and fair working conditions) and **Article 12 of the ICESCR** (right to health). Finally, the **lack of investigation and redress** in cases of sexual violence violates **Article 2 of the ICCPR**, **Article 25 of the American Convention on Human Rights**, and the duty of guarantee established in the **UN Charter of Human Rights**.

In short, the conditions documented among male and female prisoners constitute a **systematic regime of forced labor and ill-treatment** that places Cuba in direct breach of its international obligations under the **ILO, the UN, and the inter-American human rights system**, with state responsibility for serious violations of the right to integrity, health, dignity, and the absolute prohibition of slavery and forced labor.

Table 12: Violations associated with the eight female victims among the respondents

Violation of rights	Women	Percentage
Women forced to work with medical conditions	7	87,50 %
Without hygiene products (sanitary pads, change of clothes, soap, showers)	7	87,50 %
Pregnant women performing forced labor	1	12,50 %
Physically unsuitable work	7	87,50 %
Degrading jobs	4	50,00 %
Sexual harassment by authorities	2	25,00 %
Sexual harassment by other inmates	3	37,50 %
Rape	1	12,50 %

PATTERNS OF REPRESSION OF AFRO-CUBANS AND WHITES

When conducting an intersectional analysis of the testimonies, segmenting them according to race, it becomes clear that forced labor practices in Cuban prisons, despite being extremely serious violations that affect both groups, have an additional impact on **Afro-Cubans**, reproducing patterns of structural discrimination historically rooted in the Cuban prison system. As can be seen in the following comparative table, the increase in the parameters of repression is evident in 7 of the 14 areas of violation studied, while in the rest of the areas, the violations of rights are similar to those suffered by the white community. The

statistically representative sample indicates that these patterns can be extrapolated to the entire prison population.

Table 13: Violations associated with victims (Afro-descendants and whites)

TYPE OF ABUSE/VIOLATION	White	Afro-Cubans	Difference
Personal threats	100,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %
Threats to family	68,42 %	76,47 %	8,05 %
Physical violence while working	47,37 %	44,12 %	-3,25 %
Working with incompatible illnesses	94,74 %	94,12 %	-0,62 %
Deterioration in health status	78,95 %	82,35 %	3,41 %
No job protection	100,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %
No training, tools, or work equipment	100,00 %	97,06 %	-2,94 %
Abusive working hours	84,21 %	97,06 %	12,85 %
Subjected to hazardous environmental conditions	94,74 %	97,06 %	2,32 %
Without an employment contract	68,42 %	70,59 %	2,17 %
No salary or symbolic salary	84,21 %	94,12 %	9,91 %
Arbitrary salary deductions	66,67 %	90,91 %	24,24 %
No record of payments (among those who had a salary)	53,85 %	50,00 %	-3,85 %
Reprisals for refusing to work	100,00 %	100,00 %	0,00 %

The exploited Afro-Cuban community suffers **greater threats, greater health effects** (due to being assigned the hardest tasks), **longer working hours**, and is **more exposed to dangerous** or adverse **external conditions** such as pests or the climate. It also clearly suffers **worse conditions than the white community in terms of wages and contracts**. In addition, **Afro-Cuban political prisoners are overrepresented in Cuban prisons, and of these, those who perform forced labor account for 190.36%**.

This is not new, as it is linked to institutional racism in Cuba, as we demonstrated in [a detailed study on the subject on May 14](#). Cuba already demonstrated on December 16, 2024, in [a report officially submitted to the CERD](#) (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination), in section 277, that "**of the total prison population, 42% are white, 33.3% are mulatto, and 24.7% are black**," However, at the same time, it admitted that Afro-Cubans represent **58% of the prison population**, which means **172% of the overall social representation in Cuba**, which is 33.7%, a figure indicated in the same report in section 16.

Among political prisoners, racial discrimination is even more pronounced, with Afro-Cubans representing 217% of the political prison population compared to their representation in society. As we stated in [a previous report](#), while the Afro-Cuban community represents 33.7% of society, **73% of political prisoners were of African descent**, or 843 of the 1,155 political prisoners registered at the end of April 2025. That is **2.17 times their representation in society**.

In terms of race:

- There is a **net difference in rights violations** (negative vs. positive variables) **against the Afro-Cuban community of 152.28% compared to whites**, which manifests itself in seven patterns of rights violations (greater threats, greater deterioration of health, longer weekly working hours, greater exposure to external conditions such as pests, climate, etc., and clearly worse conditions than whites in terms of wages and contracts).
- **Thirty-four of the 53 respondents (64.15%)** identified themselves as **Afro-Cuban**, despite the fact that black and mixed-race people represent approximately 33.7% of the total population of Cuba according to official figures, as we have already mentioned. The overrepresentation of Afro-Cuban political prisoners in Cuban prisons, and of those who perform forced labor, is 190.36%. In a random sample such as the current one, this would indicate a bias toward the **clear predominance of political imprisonment, forced labor, and repression of the Afro-Cuban community** versus the white community.
- Among the eight female respondents, **four are Afro-Cuban (50%)**, indicating that overrepresentation is prevalent in all segments, confirming the findings.
- With regard to **physical and sexual violence**, both groups, whites and Afro-Cubans, suffer similar levels of repression, as the differences are within the margin of statistical error.
- **Abusive working hours, non-payment, and fraudulent wage deductions were clearly more prevalent in the Afro-Cuban subgroup than in the white subgroup**, reflecting a practice that is possibly discriminatory on social and/or ethnic-racial grounds.

These patterns are indicative of a policy of criminalization, control, and exploitation that particularly affects the Afro-Cuban population. The evidence of excessive repression of Afro-Cuban prisoners shows a pattern of racial discrimination contrary to international law: the [International Convention on Racial Discrimination](#) (Articles 2 and 5) prohibits discrimination in working conditions, the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR)(art. 26) enshrines equality before the law without racial distinction, and the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (arts. 1.1 and 24) prohibit discrimination and guarantee equal rights.

HOW MANY SANCTIONED PERSONS PERFORM FORCED LABOR IN CUBA?

The testimonies analyzed reveal the existence of a **national and institutionalized structure of forced labor**, which operates in all provinces of the country under different names such as "*camps*", "*farms*", "*brigades*" and "*correctional facilities*".

The denomination of these spaces as "camps" or "farms" is not fortuitous: it fulfills a function of legal and euphemistic concealment of the regime of forced exploitation, since it allows to dissociate them from the term "prison" and to evade compliance with minimum legal guarantees. These spaces function, some of them, as satellite productive units or annexed to the main penitentiary centers, often located in rural areas or areas of difficult access, and are oriented to work, mainly charcoal, but also agriculture, construction, industry, waste collection and other very diverse and particularly hard and degrading work to be performed by obligation and without remuneration, as we have shown that it happens.

A political prisoner interviewed stated:

*"All prisons have a camp next to the prison and in that camp is where they take the prisoners out when they are on minimum, that they want to give them the minimum. [...] They also have other camps further away, the charcoal camps. [...] All the prisons have a brigade or two where they make charcoal; that is on the same mountain, with terrible conditions: no hygiene, no water, often no food. [...] This charcoal is collected by the prison, and **the prison packs it and exports it to other countries**".*

This testimony, which is but one example, which we have been able to corroborate with many others, illustrates the existence of a **systemic prison productive model** where forced labor is an integral part of the

Cuban prison economy, operating under a regime of intensive exploitation with precarious conditions and without minimum labor guarantees.

STARTING DATA FOR THE NATIONAL ESTIMATE

From the 53 testimonies analyzed and dozens of other interviews conducted, the numbers of inmates performing forced labor in **40 different forced labor prisons** were identified. These data will be used to extrapolate them to the total number of penitentiaries and forced labor centers in Cuba, which at present has more than 242 of them (between prisons of greater and lesser rigor, in addition to "camps", "farms", "brigades" and "correctional facilities"). The proliferation of these centers and their economic function indicate that **forced labor is not incidental, but a structural component of the Cuban prison system**, based on the systematic extraction of free labor, including people condemned for political reasons. Testimonies shed light on **40 of these centers, where:**

- At least **7,877 common prisoners** subjected to forced labor were recorded as a partial starting figure, since it refers only to 40 centers and prisons analyzed by the 53 victims and dozens of other prisoners, common and political, who were or are in these penitentiary entities, and who have provided reliable and contrasted data on their occupation with prisoners subjected to forced labor. On many occasions the data were compared with 3 different sources for the same center).
- We identified **86 political prisoners** subjected to forced labor in those 40 centers as a partial starting figure, according to the verified count of the interviewees themselves (53 declarants and dozens of other political prisoners throughout the island) who were or are in those penitentiary entities.
- The centers were differentiated between prisons, whether of greater or lesser rigor, and forced labor centers, and the number of common and political prisoners was distributed to one or the other classification according to the data provided.

The result yielded the following figures:

- An average of **237.67 common prisoners subjected to forced labor** per reported prison.
- An average of **4.57 political prisoners subjected to forced labor** for each prison reported.

On the other hand, the official documents of the Cuban government that Prisoners Defenders delivered to the Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research of the academic institution Birkbeck, University of London, holders of the [World Prison Brief](#), were analyzed. These documents were verified and their prison occupancy data published in January 2024 by the institution. These documents present rich regional and national statistics on convictions, allowances, and numerous information that allow a broad but accurate estimate of forced labor in Cuba.

DUPLICATE ESTIMATE OF CONVICTS SUBJECTED TO FORCED LABOR IN CUBA

A. ESTIMATION USING OFFICIAL DATA

First of all, the first estimate is based on official government data. According to data published by the [World Prison Brief](#) in January 2024, Cuba's prison population (including common prisoners and those awaiting trial) is estimated at **90,300 people**, while another **37,458** are under criminal sentence in conditions of forced labor without internment. **458** are under criminal sentence in conditions of **forced labor without internment**, either by criminal convictions without internment or by Precriminal Social Dangerousness (progressively in disuse) or the new [Precriminal Penal Disobedience](#) (replacing the predelinquent and [extensively documented by Prisoners Defenders](#)), as well as other non-labor penalty allowances.

This information and its sources are well known to Prisoners Defenders, as we were the ones who provided [World Prison Brief](#) with the official documents, obtained from the highest level of the Cuban government, as

well as the analysis of these documents. The reliability of the official state documents, in addition to being verified by the Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research at Birkbeck Academic Institution, University of London, is a fact.

Thanks to these internal State documents, it is possible to extrapolate figures that allow us to make a first approximation of the total number of convicts performing forced labor in Cuba. These documents offer the percentages of prisoners (A) in the provinces with respect to the national one, as well as the types of prisoners with respect to the total of sentences (B) in the region compared to the national total. From it is possible to obtain a maximum error range between the data deduced from one or the other calculation, taking as a basis the 90,300 inmates and the 37,458 inmates in non-custodial regimes:

Table 14: calculation of national prisoners subjected to forced labor (based on government documents).

Types of allowances documented	Characteristics	Estimate A	Estimate B
Correctional labor with internment	Prisoners with forced labor	44.795	33.089
Correctional labor without internment	Prisoners under forced labor in open regime	25.597	18.908
Predelinquent and Precriminal behind bars	Prisoners with forced labor	8.400	8.400
Predelinquent and Precriminal without internment	Prisoners under forced labor in open regime	2.538	2.538
2,538 2,538 2,538 Limited freedom	Prisoners not subjected to forced labor	7.806	5.762
Conditional release	Prisoners not subjected to forced labor	4.055	3.002
TOTAL FORCED LABOR		75,030 (estimate A)	56,636 (estimate B)

In order to obtain a first approximation of the number of convicts who perform forced labor in Cuba, we have taken the average of both, that is, **65,833 convicts subjected to forced labor**.

B. DIRECT ESTIMATION BY MEANS OF DATA OBTAINED FROM 40 PRISONS AND CENTERS

From the detailed information obtained from the 53 declarants, and dozens of other prisoners and political prisoners throughout the island, for a total of **40 penitentiary centers**, we were able to count:

- **7,877 common prisoners** subjected to forced labor in those 40 centers.
- **86 political prisoners** subjected to forced labor in these 40 centers.

Thus, from each of the centers we were able to obtain the number of common prisoners and political prisoners under forced labor, through interviews with the people who were physically in them. This process led us to be able to average the number of prisoners present per center, even differentiating between prisons, which all have brigades and "granjitas" (small farms) nearby where prisoners perform forced labor, and centers dedicated to forced labor. The results yielded the following figures:

- **237.67 common prisoners subjected to forced labor.** The average in prisons was 273.70 common prisoners at forced labor, and the average in forced labor centers was 201.63 common prisoners at forced labor.

- **4.57 political prisoners subjected to forced labor.** The average in prisons was 3.63 political prisoners at forced labor, and the average in forced labor centers was 5.51 political prisoners at forced labor.

On the other hand, the work carried out has been able to identify and document the existence of at least **242 prisons or penitentiaries in Cuba**, a figure significantly higher than that which appears in the official records. This expansion in coverage evidences the inclusion of facilities commonly referred to as "**camps**" or "**farms**", which in practice operate as **centers of forced labor**, which euphemistically refers to officially as "*correctional facilities*". These spaces constitute an essential component of the system of labor exploitation within the Cuban prison system.

Applying these averages to the **242 identified penitentiary centers, among which 85 are prisons, and the remaining 157 are forced labor centers throughout the country**, and applying a simple multiplication of these values, we obtain:

Table 15: Partial calculation of prisoners subjected to forced labor (excluding predelinquent/precriminal).

Type of prisoner (forced labor)	Average for each prison	Average for each correctional facility	Totals (85 prisons)	Totals (157 Corrections)	Estimated in forced labor (242 facilities)
Common prisoners	273,70	201,63	23.182	31.717	54,899 common prisoners
Political prisoners	3,90	5,51	316	276	592 political prisoners

Given that the calculations contemplate only inmates, and that the number of those condemned for predelinquent and the new Precriminal Penal Disobedience is known from the regime documents verified by the Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research of the academic institution Birkbeck, University of London, and are **2,538 sanctioned**, so we can find the total number by this method of direct estimation.

Table 16: Calculation of inmates subjected to forced labor by direct estimation.

Total common inmates at forced labor	Total political inmates at forced labor	Total predelinquent/precriminal inmates in open regime	NATIONAL TOTAL
54,899 common prisoners	592 political prisoners	2,538 Prisoners	58,029 sentenced to forced labor in Cuba

C. AVERAGE CALCULATION ON TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS SUBJECTED TO FORCED LABOR

The average of the data obtained through the calculation, based on internal government documents, yielded a figure of **65,833** convicts subjected to forced labor. The calculation through direct data collection from 40 prisons and centers, extrapolating to the total number of prisons and centers in Cuba, was **58,029** convicts subjected to forced labor. The average is 61,920 convicts performing forced labor.

Therefore, it is deduced, with a limited margin of error, for the seriousness of the facts, that:

IN CUBA THERE ARE 60,000 PUNISHED PERFORMING FORCED LABOR.

DETAILED RESULTS ON THE REALITY OF FORCED LABOR IN CUBA

All documents, data sources and testimonies, including those of the government itself, lead us to the methodological and documented conclusion that **in Cuba there are at least 60,000 sanctioned persons subjected to forced labor.**

The activities that these people perform are, in this order, the following:

- Production of marabu charcoal
- Cutting of sugar cane (zafra)
- Other agricultural production
- Other (construction, factories, raw materials, etc.)
- Garbage
- Street cleaning
- Work in state social institutions
- Other additional not sufficiently documented

Most of the activities are for the purpose of obtaining economic benefit from forced labor, both for domestic and for export (charcoal case and others), and the inhumane conditions under which this labor is performed has been extensively documented by 53 direct testimonies, the results of which are:

Table 17: Complete results of the 53 statements tabulated.

SAMPLE UNIVERSE AND QUESTIONS ASKED IN THE DECLARATIONS	TOTALS
Declarants	53
WOMEN	8
Did the inmate have any health conditions that were dangerous for forced labor?	87,50%
While working... was she provided with adequate means of hygiene (sanitary napkins, change of clothes, soap, showers)?	12,50%
Was the inmate pregnant when she had to perform forced labor?	12,50%
Was the inmate breastfeeding when she had to perform forced labor?	0,00%
Did she have to perform work that was physically unsuitable for a woman?	87,50%
Did she have to perform work that could be considered degrading for a woman?	50,00%
DEGRADING AND UNSUITABLE WORK FOR WOMEN	87,50%
Did you suffer sexual harassment by the authorities?	25,00%
Were you raped by the authorities?	0,00%
Did you suffer sexual harassment by other inmates?	37,50%
Were you ever raped by other inmates?	12,50%
SEXUAL HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE (FEMALE)	50,00%
Average age of respondents when first subjected to forced labor in prison:	36,34
ALL	53
Was the prisoner presented with a labor contract?	30,19%
Was forced labor applied as a form of punishment?	67,92%
Before starting the forced labor, was he/she medically evaluated to see if he/she was fit to perform the work tasks assigned?	5,66%
Was such medical evaluation requested by the prisoner (question applicable only to the above)?	100,00%
Was the medical follow-up and control occasional or periodic (question applicable only to the above)?	92,45%
Were you provided with medications for your ailments from prison (excluding those brought to you by family)?	30,19%
Were you given medicines for your ailments that were brought to you by the family?	49,06%

Was the prisoner medically fit to perform such forced labor?	20,75%
NO PROVISION OF MEDICATION AND MEDICAL FOLLOW-UP	98,11%
Indicate the prisoner's ailments and health conditions that he/she had before starting forced labor:	79,25%
DID YOUR HEALTH WORSEN BECAUSE OF FORCED LABOR?	81,13%
Did the inmate have adequate medical health care while in forced labor?	13,21%
On the job ... was he/she provided with adequate tools and adequate clothing and protection?	3,77%
On the job ... were you provided with adequate food, water and care to strengthen your health on the job?	11,32%
At work ... were you provided with adequate courses, education and training for the tasks?	1,89%
At work... were you protected from weather hazards (heat, humidity, cold, rain, etc.)?	11,32%
At work... were you protected against other external hazards (fumes, dirt)?	15,09%
At work... were you protected against pests and vectors (mosquitoes, bites, pests, animals, noxious plants, etc.)?	11,32%
Did the prisoner see or suffer accidents at work?	47,17%
Did the authorities act quickly to cure or repair the health of the affected person/s?	5,66%
BASIC OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY DEFICIENCIES	100,00%
WORK WITH INCOMPATIBLE ILLNESSES	94,34%
NO LABOR AND RISK PROTECTION	100,00%
NO TRAINING, TOOLS OR WORKING TOOLS	98,11%
SUBJECT TO RISKS FROM EXTERNAL CONDITIONS (WEATHER, PESTS, ETC.)	96,23%
Days/week	6,37
Hours/day	9,84
Hours/week	63,06
More than 40 hours/week	92,45%
Between the reported hours of work, did the prisoner have at least 20 to 30 minutes of rest in between?	73,58%
Were any amounts deducted from his/her salary by the authorities for the use or rental of these tools for work?	41,51%
Were you deducted from your salary amounts by the authorities for food, water or supplies needed for work?	47,17%
With respect to the payment of such salary, did the authorities pay seriously and in a timely and proper manner?	9,43%
With respect to the payment of such salary, did the authorities pay in cash (1) or were the amounts withheld (0)?	54,29%
SALARY VIOLATIONS	94,34%
NO WAGE	64,15%
ADDITIONAL ABUSIVE SALARY DEDUCTIONS	71,43%
AVERAGE WAGE	2.97 USD
SYMBOLIC SALARY	47,37%
DID YOU SUFFER RETALIATION FOR REFUSING TO WORK?	100,00%
Did the prisoner suffer disciplinary infractions during the forced labor?	60,38%
Isolation	56,60%
Segregation	15,09%
Additional punishments	52,83%
Did the inmate suffer sexual harassment or sexual violence while working?	16,98%
Did the inmate suffer threats against him/her while working?	66,04%
Did he/she suffer indirect threats against his/her family while working?	54,72%
Did his/her family suffer direct threats while he/she was in prison?	71,70%

Did the inmate suffer physical violence while working?	43,40%
PERSONAL THREATS	100,00%
THREATS TO THE FAMILY	73,58%
COERCION, THREATS, VIOLENCE OR RETALIATION	100,00%
VIOLENCE	45,28%
NUMBER OF AFRO-CUBANS IN THE SAMPLE	64,15%

The study reveals the existence of an institutionalized system of exploitation, which uses euphemisms such as "camps" or "farms" to hide the reality of contemporary slavery.

The Cuban prison system not only violates the Mandela Rules, the ICCPR, the ILO Conventions and all international labor standards, but also constitutes a machinery of repression and extraction of economic value through coercion, suffering and abuse. This structure is sustained by impunity, the absence of independent oversight and the use of labor as a punishment, a mechanism for political subjugation and a source of state profit.

The Cuban state must be held internationally accountable for these crimes, which amount to massive, systematic and widespread human rights violations. It is urgent:

- International condemnation and a ban on trade based on these practices.
- Urge the government of Cuba to immediately cease these practices.
- The opening of the prison system to independent international missions.
- The guarantee of decent working and prison conditions, based on voluntariness, health, safety and fair pay.
- And full reparations for victims of forced labor, including women and Afro-descendants subjected to aggravated forms of discrimination.

Cuban prisons are not rehabilitation centers, but spaces of punishment, control and exploitation. And their structural transformation is a debt owed to human dignity.

LEGAL OPINION ON THE FORCED LABOR OF PRISONERS IN CUBA

ON HOW THE CUBAN LAW ENABLES THIS SCOURGE

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF THE OPINION

This section is based on the systematic legal analysis of Law No. 151/2022 "Penal Code", Law No. 152/2022 "Law of Penal Execution", Decree-Law 74/2023 approving its Regulations, the Regulations of the Penitentiary System (Order No. 7/2016 of the Ministry of the Interior), Instructions of the People's Supreme Court (special 13/2022, 273/2022 and 274/2022), as well as the 2019 Constitution, the Labor Code (Law No. 116/2013) and its Regulations (Decree No. 326/2014). These texts have been contrasted with international standards (ILO Conventions No. 29 and 105, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 8 and American Convention on Human Rights art. 6), and with the complaint report of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery (A/HRC/57/46), **to determine whether the praxis described in this complaint report violates Cuban legislation or, on the contrary, whether the legal architecture of Cuban legislation even explicitly encourages coercion to work of those sanctioned and arbitrariness in the imposition of sanctions, changes of penal status and deprivations of rights for the lucrative purpose of the State through forced labor**, which this complaint report demonstrates occurs in practice.

Some official sources consulted:

- [Cuban Official Gazette No. 93/2022 \(Law 151/2022 "Penal Code"\).](#)
- [Penal Code \(GOC-2022-861-093\)](#)

- [Cuban Official Gazette No. 94/2022 \(Law 152/2022 "Penal Enforcement Law"\)](#)
- [Cuban Law 152 "Penal Enforcement Law" \(Ley 152 "Ley de Ejecución Penal"\)](#)
- [Cuban Official Gazette No. 95/2023 \(Decree-Law 74/2023, Regulations to Law 152\)](#)
- [Cuban Official Gazette No. 73 Extraordinary/2022 \(Instructions 13/2022, 273/2022 and 274/2022\)](#)
- [Cuban Constitution of 2019 \(Official Gazette No. 5 Extraordinary\)](#)
- [Cuban Labor Code - Law No. 116 \(current version\)](#)
- [Cuban Decree No. 326/2014 - Regulations of the Labor Code \(PDF\)](#)
- [ILO - Forced Labor Convention \(No. 29\)](#)
- [ILO - Abolition of Forced Labor Convention \(No. 105\)](#)
- [ICCPR - Official text \(art. 8\)](#)
- [ACHR - Official text \(art. 6\)](#)
- [UN - A/HRC/57/46 \(Special Rapporteur on Slavery\)](#)

ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN APPLICABLE CUBAN NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

1) Law No. 151/2022 "Penal Code"

The Penal Code lists as main sanctions, among others, "*correctional work with internment*", "*correctional work without internment*" and "*community service*". The regulation foresees specific obligations **linking the sanctioned person to his work center, as well as other mandatory work activities that they must perform in certain cases for a period of 3 years, including Saturdays and Sundays without receiving any salary remuneration and restricts changes without judicial authorization.**

"The main sanctions are as follows: [...] c) correctional work with internment; e) correctional work without internment; d) home confinement; f) community service; g) limitation of liberty." (art. 30.3)

"[In correctional work without internment] the court [...] imposes on the sanctioned person the following obligations: [...] b) to demonstrate, with a good attitude in the work or study center or activity where he is placed, that he has understood the purposes pursued by the sanction; c) he may not change his job or study center without the authorization of the court; d) he may not change his residence [...] without the authorization of the court." (arts. 37.2.b-d)

*"The penalty of correctional work with internment is applicable when, due to the nature of the offense, its circumstances and the individual characteristics of the offender, there are reasonable grounds to believe that **his social reintegration is likely to be achieved through work**. 2. The court, when applying the sanction of correctional work with internment, imposes the following obligations on the sanctioned person: a) to demonstrate, **with his attitude** in the internment place to which he is assigned, that he has understood the unfavorable consequences derived from the criminal act committed; and b) to use the income from his work for the care and maintenance of his family, as well as **for the fulfillment of the obligations imposed in the sentence and other legally established obligations**"* (art. 35). (art. 35)

In home confinement, the Penal Code itself requires the offender to maintain "**a correct attitude towards work**" (art. 36.3.a), which evidences the **centrality of work performance in the execution of non-custodial sanctions.**

As for the limitation of liberty, the state provides the sanctioned person with a job designated by the state itself when it deems it appropriate. Thus, in addition, the conditions of this situation in the Criminal Code again refer us to a **centrality of work performance and the consequences for its criminal sanction, since it is the state that assesses its attitude arbitrarily:**

*"2. The court, when applying the sanction of limitation of freedom imposes on the sanctioned person the following obligations: a) To maintain **a correct attitude towards work**, study and society, of strict compliance with the laws and the provisions established by the court."* (art. 39.2)

Therefore, in all of them **the authorities can revoke the sanction to one of greater rigor** by means of the **mere unilateral value judgment** made by the state, through its officials, **on the work that the state itself obliges him to perform.**

Even for prosecution dismissals, there is a dismissal "conditioned" to a "probationary period", as mentioned in Articles 90.h and 95 of the Criminal Code. The Law of Penal Execution, in addition, establishes that the dismissal of a prosecution, conditioned to a "probation period", can be revoked, as established by Decree-Law 74 of 2023 Regulation of Law 152 of Penal Execution in its article 163, in such a way that the person would be prosecuted again after the prosecution has been dismissed, and the causes for this would suffice to be the negative reports of his employment center, or any institution or even the so-called "mass organizations". In the Cuban Law, the "probationary period" is not only related to the criminal acts but, again, to the employment relationship assigned to the subject by the state, and other issues, including ideological ones, as expressed in Article 163.2 ("*The representatives of the organs, agencies, state and non-state entities, and social and mass*

organizations **involved in the activity of control, influence and care of the convicted person, may also request, through the enforcement judge, the revocations or modifications**").

2) Law No. 152/2022 "Penal Execution Law"

The Criminal Code lists as main penalties, among others, "correctional labor with imprisonment," "correctional labor without imprisonment," and "community service." The law establishes specific obligations that bind the offender to their workplace, as well as other mandatory work activities that must be performed in certain cases for a period of three years, including Saturdays and Sundays, without receiving any remuneration, and restricts changes without judicial authorization.

"The main penalties are as follows: [...] c) correctional work with imprisonment; e) correctional work without imprisonment; d) house arrest; f) community service; g) restriction of liberty." (Art. 30.3)

"[In correctional work without imprisonment] the court [...] imposes the following obligations on the offender: [...] b) to demonstrate, with a good attitude at the work or study center or activity where they are located, that they have understood the purposes of the sanction; c) they may not change their job or study center without the court's authorization; d) not change residence [...] without the court's authorization." (arts. 37.2.b-d)

*"The sanction of correctional work with imprisonment is applicable when, due to the nature of the crime, its circumstances, and the individual characteristics of the offender, there are well-founded reasons to believe that **their social reintegration is likely to be achieved through work**. 2. When applying the penalty of correctional labor with confinement, the court shall impose the following obligations on the offender: a) To demonstrate, **through their attitude** in the place of confinement to which they are assigned, that they have understood the unfavorable consequences of the criminal act committed; and b) to use the income from their work for the care and maintenance of their family, as well as **for the fulfillment of the obligations imposed in the sentence and other legally established obligations**."* (Art. 35)

In the case of house arrest, the Criminal Code itself requires the offender to maintain "**a proper attitude toward work**" (Art. 36.3.a), which highlights the **centrality of work performance in the enforcement of non-custodial sanctions**.

With regard to restriction of liberty, the state provides the offender with a job designated by the state itself when it deems it appropriate. In addition, the conditions of this situation in the Criminal Code once again refer us to the centrality of work performance and the consequences for criminal punishment, since it is the state that assesses the offender's attitude arbitrarily:

*"2. When applying the sanction of restriction of liberty, the court imposes the following obligations on the offender: a) To maintain **a proper attitude towards work**, study, and society, strictly complying with the laws and provisions established by the court."* (Art. 39.2)

Therefore, in all cases, **the authorities can revoke the sanction to a more severe one** through the **mere unilateral value judgment** made by the state, through its officials, **on the work that the state itself obliges the offender to perform**.

Even for dismissals of cases, there is a dismissal "conditional" on a "probationary period," as mentioned in Articles 90.h and 95 of the Penal Code. The Penal Enforcement Law in addition establishes that the dismissal of a case, conditional on a "probationary period," may be revoked, as established in Decree -Law 74 of 2023, Regulation of Law 152 on Criminal Enforcement, in its article 163, so that the person would be condemned again after the case had been dismissed, and the grounds for this would be sufficient if they were negative reports from their place of employment, or any institution, or even so-called "mass organizations." In Cuban law, the "probation period" is not only related to criminal acts but, again, to the employment relationship assigned to the individual by the state, and other issues, including ideological ones, as stated in Article 163.2 (*"The representatives of state and non-state bodies, agencies, entities, and social and mass organizations that **are involved in the control, influence, and supervision of the sanctioned person may also request, through the enforcement judge, revocations or modifications**"*).

3) Decree-Law 74/2023 (Regulations to Law 152/2022)

The Regulation introduces time limits and temporal consequences that operate de facto as constraints to work in the sanctions without internment and community service: **if the prisoner does not start working within 15 days from the initial appearance, the time of extinction of the sentence is rectified by extending the computation, without even specifying the punishable causes of the delay, which increases the coercive capacity over the prisoners**.

*"[In] correctional work without internment and service for the benefit of the community [...] **within 15 days he must begin to work in the work or study center in which he was placed**. In cases where the*

sanctioned person does not start working within the term [...] **the date of termination is rectified**, taking into account [...] the time he/she did not start working [...]" (art. 4.2 and 4.3).

4) Regulation of the Penitentiary System (Order No. 7/2016, MININT)

Regulation in force places penitentiary treatment on the principles of "honest attitude towards work", and conditions relevant benefits to the "**exceptional conduct in socially useful work**". In addition, it establishes specific prohibitions linked to the work placement of inmates. It also recognizes the prohibition on the choice of the place and position of work assigned by the authorities.

"[Treatment] based on the principles of an honest attitude towards work, strict compliance with the laws and respect for the rules of social coexistence." (art. 3).

"Additional reduction of sixty days [...] for exceptional **conduct in socially useful work**..." (art. 65.b).

"[Prohibition:] **to change the place of work** ... in which he/she was placed without authorization." (art. 75.c).

TYPES OF SANCTIONS WITH A LABOR COMPONENT AND THEIR ENFORCEMENT

The regulatory framework articulates three key figures: (i) correctional work with internment; (ii) correctional work without internment; and (iii) community service. All three require **a strong link with labor activity, judicial and police supervision, and restrictions on mobility and change of employment**.

- Correctional work without internment: obligations not to change jobs without authorization, to attend court when summoned and to **demonstrate "good attitude" in the work center**.

- Service for the benefit of the community is defined as an unpaid activity of public utility that is also managed, controlled and may be revoked by the authorities.

"[Service for the benefit of the community] consists of the obligation to perform an activity or service of public and community utility, **not remunerated to the sanctioned person**." (art. 38.1, Penal Code).

NORMATIVE MEANS OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT COERCION TO WORK

Even though the Criminal Enforcement Act invokes "voluntariness" for access to intramural employment, it also eliminates the rights of the Labor Code **for criminal offenders, which are limited "as applicable"**, that is, without restriction and under rules that curtail them, since multiple provisions operate as **negative incentives or covert sanctions** by means of:

- a) **Conditioning prison benefits** to work results.
- b) **Extending the term of compliance for failure to return to work** on time.
- c) **Revocation or aggravation of alternatives when work-related obligations are violated**.
- d) **Disciplinary prohibitions related to the job**; and
- e) **Police and community control, even at liberty**.

"When the sanctioned person refuses to comply with the obligations inherent to [the alternative] or violates it, the court [...] may order: a) its modification by **another alternative of greater rigor** [...] b) its **revocation by that of temporary deprivation of liberty or correctional work with internment**." (art. 33.1, Penal Execution Law).

The disjunctive conjunction "or" (e.g., "temporary deprivation of liberty or correctional work with internment") gives the authority **a wide margin to opt for the most severe response to non-criminal noncompliance, reinforcing the coercive and punitive nature of the government** even when formally affirmed in a few rules the hypothetical but ineffective voluntariness.

PRISON BENEFITS CONDITIONED TO WORK PERFORMANCE

The benefits of sentence reductions, permits and regime progression depend expressly on "**relevant results at work**". This design **turns work into a key to punitive relief and, in its absence, delays or prevents the obtaining of benefits, encouraging the labor bond under duress**.

"Additional reduction [...] for exceptional conduct **and relevant results in work** [...]" (art. 103.1.b, Law of Penal Execution; art. 65.b, Regulation of the Penitentiary System).

In this sense, political prisoner V.P. indicated to us:

*"The change of penitentiary regime, or camp, as it is known, is not a benefit, it is a tool! The political police use it for various reasons, and it works very well for them. All the inmates who are serving a sentence, whether for common crimes or political cases, yearn for their freedom and the police use it. Simple example: an inmate sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment who has served about 3 years of his sentence and has 12 years left is prone to do whatever is proposed to him to obtain prison passes and benefits, and the political police negotiate with all of this. Types of treatment: 1) Forced labor; 2) Being part of the network of obtaining information from political prisoners in prison; 3) Lending himself to fabricating false causes to other prisoners, beating and mistreating them in order to break them or introduce prohibited articles among their belongings; 4) Many other undignified treatments. There is no greater incentive to get what you want from someone than to play with total impunity and power with their freedom and their fundamental rights as a human being.... The inmates who are in camp will put up with anything to get out of a pass. **Whoever complains and expresses dissatisfaction** with the conditions in the camp **is sent to a closed prison**, and nobody wants that. That's why **they endure and suffer quietly**."*

Those sanctioned are forced to accept violations of the clauses of the labor contracts to which they may eventually be entitled, since if they claim their rights before internal order officials, they could designate the claim as "disrespect" or "disobedience," without subsequent verification or judicial protection, which are considered serious indiscipline in the Criminal Enforcement Law in its article 118.e ("**disrespecting prison authorities and other authorities in the exercise of their functions;**") and 118.r ("**making individual or collective complaints or requests, as an expression of assuming positions of force or disobedience to prison authority**"), and which lead to revocation to a maximum security regime, with which they are threatened at all times by officials in order to obtain the desired servitude in forced labor.

CORRECTIONAL WORK WITHOUT INTERNMENT AND COMMUNITY CONTROL

The free execution of correctional work is supported by a dense control system: execution judges, National Revolutionary Police, mass organizations(sic.) and work directorates(sic). It is required to be incorporated in 15 days, to maintain a good work attitude and to submit changes of employment to judicial authorization.

"The sanction of correctional work without internment is carried out under the attention, influence, control and surveillance of the judge of execution, the National Revolutionary Police, the mass organizations [...]" (arts. 40-45, Law of Penal Execution).

PRISON REGULATIONS AND WORK-RELATED DISCIPLINE

The Prison System Regulations, in addition to making benefits conditional on work results, **expressly prohibit unauthorized changes in the workplace**. This type of infraction **results in disciplinary measures and affects the calculation of reductions, creating a circle of labor subjection**.

"Prohibition:] to change the place of work [...] without authorization". (art. 75.c, Prison System Regulations).

COLLISION WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

In addition to other international standards, the prohibition of forced labor in ILO Convention No. 29 and its reinforcement in Convention No. 105, together with Article 8 of the ICCPR and Article 6 of the ACHR, **require that prison labor not be imposed as a form of coercion or as a condition for obtaining essential benefits or avoiding aggravation**.

- ILO Convention No. 105 **prohibits forced labor "as a means of disciplinary labor" and "as punishment for having participated in strikes,"** which is incompatible with systems that condition basic prison benefits on the acceptance of assigned labor, as in the Cuban case.

- Article 8 of the ICCPR excludes from the concept of forced labor only the "normal work of a person deprived of liberty" if it is "by virtue of a judicial decision," but **requires that it not be exploited or performed under abusive conditions**.

- Article 6 of the ACHR completely outlaws forced labor, except for prison labor by judicial condemnation, which **must meet standards of dignity, safety, and remuneration comparable to civilian working conditions**.

LABOR CODE AND THE CONSTITUTION: RIGHTS AND THEIR PRACTICAL INEFFECTIVENESS

The Labor Code (Law 116/2013) and its Regulations (Decree 326/2014) enunciate rights to salary, working hours, occupational safety and health, and freedom of association. However, **the Penal Enforcement Law limits the scope of these norms only to "what is applicable"** (art. 109.a LEP), leaving the way open to interpretation and denial of rights, and the Regulation in addition allows and encourages **extensive deductions on the remuneration** (art. 108.f LEP). In prison practice, this **turns labor guarantees into ambiguously conditioned expectations that are not enforceable on an equal basis**.

The 2019 Constitution recognizes the right to work and decent remuneration; however, **the structure of conditional prison benefits and correctional labor obligations override those rights for sanctioned persons**. Article 45 of the Constitution, in addition, subjects the interpretation of the Constitution to lower order laws, which discredits it as Magna Carta and allows it to be a dead letter.

"Article 45. The exercise of the rights of individuals is only limited by the rights of others, collective security, general welfare, respect for public order, the Constitution **and the laws**."

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE DERIVED FROM THE PRESENT COMPLAINT REPORT

This complaint report on forced labor in Cuban prisons and forced labor correctional centers identifies recurring patterns of coercion (mandatory assignment, disciplinary sanctions for refusal, loss of benefits and retaliation, and multiple additional violations). These findings are consistent with the normative design described and with the Special Rapporteur's complaint report A/HRC/57/46 on risks of contemporary forms of slavery in prison contexts.

Table 18: Matrix of normative clashes

Cuban norm	Text/Art.	Effect in practice	International Standard	Collision/Comment
<u>Law 152/2022 (LEP)</u>	Art. 103.1.b: additional rebate for "relevant work results".	Decisive benefits conditional on work.	<u>ILO C29</u>	Structural conditioning of benefits to work reinforces coercion.
<u>DL 74/2023 (Regl. LEP)</u>	Art. 4.2-4.3: 15 days to join; if not, the term is extended.	Temporary requirement to enter to work.	<u>ICCPR art. 8</u>	Risk of "involuntary" work under threat of prolongation of sanction.
<u>Penitentiary System Regulations (MININT)</u>	Art. 65.b: reduction for "exceptional conduct in socially useful work".	Direct relation between performance and prison benefits.	<u>ILO C105</u>	Prohibition to use forced labor as a method of discipline or coercion.
<u>PC Law 151/2022</u>	Art. 37.2.b-d: obligation of good attitude in the workplace and prohibition to change without authorization.	Labor subjection and job control.	<u>ACHR art. 6</u>	Dignity must be respected and not become forced labor.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO CUBAN LEGISLATION

CUBA'S LEGAL ARCHITECTURE EXPLICITLY ENABLES COERCION TO WORK

- It conditions essential penitentiary benefits to "relevant results in work".
- It imposes peremptory deadlines to return to work with aggravating consequences for the sanction period.
- Provides for the revocation of alternatives and substitution for more severe sanctions in the event of ambiguous non-compliance related to work.
- It establishes disciplinary prohibitions related to the job. This set of prohibitions and contradictions with the "voluntariness" expressed in some rules as only declarative and not enforceable.

THE INCOMPATIBILITY WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IS OBVIOUS

1. ILO C29/C105, ICCPR art. 8 and ACHR art. 6 allow prison labor only under strict safeguards and without coercion. **The Cuban legal and normative design, on the contrary, uses work as a key to benefits and as an instrument of penitentiary government.**
2. **The Labor Code and constitutional rights become a dead letter** for the prison population: the LEP subordinates its validity to "what is applicable", leaving full and free interpretation to the limitation, and allows broad deductions on remuneration, while the praxis demonstrated in this complaint report shows the absence of wage equivalence, violated health and safety and the absence of free choice of employment, in addition to multiple and very serious violations of additional rights.

CAN PRISON LABOR BE IMPOSED?

Yes, the LEP removes the rights granted by the Labor Code for individuals subject to criminal sanctions (for them, it explicitly subordinates its validity to "whatever is applicable"). Benefits and reductions depend on work performance; failure to report within 15 days extends the effective sanction; and, once released, refusal may result in modification or revocation of the alternative.

ARE BENEFITS OBTAINED "IN EXCHANGE" FOR WORK?

Yes, the LEP (art. 103.1.b) and the Prison System Regulations (art. 65.b) provide for additional reductions for work results, and work conduct impacts permits and progressions.

IS THERE ANY RULE THAT PREVENTS THE EXCHANGE OF PRISON BENEFITS FOR WORK?

No. There is no clause that prohibits conditioning benefits to work performance; on the contrary, the positive regulation clearly allows and encourages it.

IS DISCRETION EXERCISED UNDER CUBAN LAW?

Yes. Cuba's broad legislation empowers and protects discretion in the application of rights that some regulations claim to protect, given the abusive use of disjunctive and open options that create ambiguity exploited by the State to apply forced labor under the protection of the very laws that claim to prevent it, while other laws and regulations permit the application of forced labor and the coercive options of the State to apply it. Cuban law is full of examples. It is used at all times. It is an internal norm of the legal authorities in Cuba to use mechanisms such as the conjunction "or", "and", open exceptions, subordination to other unspecified laws or authorities orders and other forms of arbitrariness, **allowing State Security to act as it wishes at any given moment**.

All this sounds strange to a lawyer unfamiliar with Cuban legal matters, because it represents the anti-law, but let's look at one or more examples to see it more clearly. The **2019 Constitution** appears to grant rights, but it is **full of these open disjunctions and subordination to lower-level laws** (a legal aberration that undermines the Constitution as the Magna Carta). These are exactly the same arguments about this and other similar constitutions put forward by Dieter Grimm, former judge of the German Federal Constitutional Court and Professor of Law at Humboldt University in Berlin and Yale Law School, in the section [Types of Constitution](#) of the [Manual of Comparative Constitutional Law](#) of Oxford University, which defined this type of constitution as **anti-constitutions**.

With this procedure, the Cuban government **turns around, with a lower-level regulation, what a supposedly higher-level law seems to imply**. This allows the authorities to deny all rights, without exception, and give crumbs to the system's supporters inside and outside Cuba. It is a "*savoir-faire*" practiced for 67 years by the Cuban authorities, which has its roots in the methodology of the Soviet Union, as was the case with the laws of those countries. Let's look at just a few examples from the current Cuban Constitution to see this clearly:

"ARTICLE 49. The home is inviolable. No one may enter another's home without the permission of the person who lives there, **except by express order of the competent authority.**"

"ARTICLE 50. Correspondence and other forms of communication between individuals are inviolable. They **may only be intercepted or searched by express order of the competent authority.**"

"ARTICLE 52. Individuals have the freedom to enter, remain in, transit through, and leave the national territory, change their domicile or residence, with no limitations other **than those established by law.**"

*"ARTICLE 56. The rights of assembly, demonstration, and association for lawful and peaceful purposes are recognized by the State **provided that they are exercised with respect for public order and in compliance with the provisions established by law.**"*

*ARTICLE 56. The rights of assembly, demonstration, and association for lawful and peaceful purposes are recognized by the State, **provided that they are exercised with respect for public order and compliance with the provisions established by law.***

As if that were not clear enough, the Cuban government closes the door on arbitrariness by subordinating the Constitution to ordinary laws and regulations:

*"ARTICLE 45. The exercise of individual rights is limited only by the rights of others, **collective security, general welfare, respect for public order, the Constitution, AND the laws.**"*

Returning to the matter at hand, if the LEP, as can be read, explicitly excludes the validity of the rights of the Labor Code for those "sanctioned" criminally to "whatever is applicable," it is sufficient for the authority to officially indicate that "it is not applicable," or for any other state regulation, including those of a ministry or the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions (SGIP), to indicate this, for those rights to be invalid.

CONSEQUENCES OF CUBAN LAW ENABLING COERCION TO WORK

The Cuban Penal Execution Law (Law 152/2022)⁵ regulates the labor bond for inmates from Article 107 to 115, and in a generic sense states: "Work is the fundamental means for the educational process of persons deprived of liberty and prepares them for their social reintegration." And that **"these activities must respect human dignity and provide safe and healthy conditions"**, however, the human dignity of Cuban common and political prisoners, far from being protected and guaranteed, is deeply and abominably violated. Despite what this Law establishes and what is framed in the Cuban Labor Code (Law 116/2013)⁶, in practice, and through the performance of the laws and regulations analyzed in the previous section, **the conditions of safety and hygiene at work, of persons deprived of liberty, are not guaranteed to prevent accidents, diseases, other damages to health and for a better work performance, directly transgressing the alleged labor rights of prisoners referring to "Health and safety at work" described in Articles 126 and 127 of the aforementioned labor code, where it is stipulated "Health and safety at work, has as its objectives to guarantee safe and hygienic conditions, prevent accidents, occupational diseases and other damages to the health of workers and the work environment", and "The employer is obliged to comply with the legislation on health and safety at work and adopt measures that guarantee safe and hygienic working conditions, as well as the prevention of accidents at work, occupational diseases, fires, breakdowns or other damages that may affect the health of workers".**

The political prisoners carry out the charcoal production work **without the required protective equipment such as masks, gloves and boots required to carry out these tasks.** The father of political prisoner W.L.A.R. told Prisoners Defenders that *"the prisoners are working like slaves, they are being subjected to inhumane work, mainly the political prisoners, cutting logs with their bare hands for the production of charcoal, not even a saw, machete or axe. Their hands are full of blisters, so that they cannot sit down".*⁷

The inmates who make up the cane cutting brigades, in most cases **do not have gloves, boots and files, the latter of which means that the axes do not have the necessary sharpness to do the job efficiently, showing that they are treated inhumanely. The food is scarce and terrible;** the family of Y.C.P., a political prisoner, has complained that the prisoner suffers from *"severe skin problems (due to exposure to the climate during the exhausting workdays), suffers from **starvation** and the work he performs is for a miserable salary".*⁸ Generally, **the established rest breaks during the workday and the paid annual vacation period are not complied with.** The protection and working conditions of the workers are not taken care of, violating their rights and guarantees.

The mother of political prisoner R.J.M.F. has complained on multiple occasions about the terrible working conditions to which her son is subjected: *"... the prisoners are the ones who push the cart, because the tractor*

⁵ [Penal Execution Law \(Law 152/2022\) \(Ley de Ejecución Penal \(Law 152/2022\) | Official Gazette \(gob.cu\)\)](#)

⁶ [Labor Code Law \(Law 152/2022\) | Official Gazette \(gob.cu\)](#)

⁷ [Audio father of the political prisoner Walnier Luis Aguilar Rivera](#)

⁸ [News Y.C.P.](#)

is broken, they carry sacks on their backs full of debris for miles, the work they do there is slave labor, dog labor".

⁹

In spite of the fact that the norm establishes that there must be voluntariness to work (access to employment), the laws and norms analyzed in the previous section disregard this parameter, since **the prisoners are forced to perform forced labor**. This is demonstrated by the 53 declarants and many thousands of Cubans who work in these prisons, where correctional work with and without internment is institutionalized in the Cuban penal system, as is evident, and when the prisoner refuses to work, they are threatened and retaliated against by being denied their rights (phone calls, leave, etc.), and disciplinary corrections are imposed on them.), imposing disciplinary corrections that are fabricated by officials of internal order (FOI), reeducators and high-ranking officials, all of this under the protection of the legislation studied in the previous section. However, for **60,000 Cuban prisoners**, the punitive sentences require the obligation to work, generating a train wreck with the principle of voluntariness.

Political prisoners are constantly transferred from penitentiary centers without prior notice to their families, which is another form of repression, and they are relocated to work **without having previously undergone a medical check-up** to certify their physical and mental health and fitness for work. **Only 3 (5.66%) of the 53 testimonies taken in this study were medically evaluated prior to exposure to the aforementioned forced labor** in poor conditions.

81.13% of the testimonies certify that they did not receive, or do not receive, any economic remuneration or receive a symbolic one (less than US\$4 per month), which would correspond to the work performed and its results. If the symbolic salary is 15 dollars, none of the 10 who did receive any amount exceeded this limit. In charcoal, as we have been able to verify in a video in the field, but also by the 53 testimonies in this complaint report, the prisoners receive between **34 and 62 cents per ton of marabou charcoal produced entirely by them, without the tools, nor the conditions for it.**

The average number of hours that Cuban prisoners are subjected to this forced labor, corroborated by the 53 testimonies, is 63.06 hours per week.

In 69.81% of the cases (37 of the 53 declarants) there is no work contract between the inmate, the prison and the employing entity, and they report that they **have never read, signed or received any labor contract**. In other cases, the minimum **labor protection clauses of the contract are omitted, and the duties, rights and guarantees are not clearly described**. For example, the remuneration established for the work performed and the payment system are not clearly stated. On many occasions, the payment is limited to allowing the monthly leave to which they were already entitled, so it is a system of coercion, and not remuneration.

The vast majority of the **jobs described by the inmates require inmate training and entail clear occupational risks**, so it is imperative, always, to provide professional training prior to the start of the activity. However, **98.11% of the demonstrators state that none of them received any courses, training or qualification for their jobs**. Thus, people are forced to work **without the minimum training, which leads to accidents during the long working days, which further increase the risk of accidents**. Thus, 47.17% of the demonstrators stated that they saw or suffered serious accidents at work, such as the loss of a finger, broken legs, feet, hands and arms, serious costs with tools (machetes), falls, and many other accidents that are witnessed by the authorities, and for only 5.66% of the demonstrators did the authorities act to medically attend to medical emergencies and accidents at work. Prisoners, in addition, are punished for these accidents, which the repressors in the forced labor camps call "negligence". An example is the case of the political prisoner C. G., founder of an important human rights movement in Cuba, and one more victim of the forced labor of charcoal production, who *"must produce fifty sacks of charcoal a month. If he does not comply, he is under threat of being sent to the maximum-security prison of Canaleta"*.¹⁰

The inhuman and degrading working conditions and the use of the inmates as slave labor, **poorly fed, without medicines, without work utensils, with non-existent, unpaid or symbolic salaries** in most cases (64.15%), exposed to **exhausting workdays** and forced to comply with demanding daily production standards, under penalty of **reprisals and being sent back to closed prison regimes**, as testified by the declarants, have been denounced for years by the victims without the structure and dissemination of the complaints having allowed what, this time, we hope to achieve with this complaint report.

⁹ [Link to the complaint](#)

¹⁰ [Reference publication](#)

INTERNATIONAL APPROACH IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The assessment of forced labor imposed on persons deprived of their liberty in Cuba requires the application of a widely recognized international normative framework, which includes both **legally binding instruments** for the Cuban State and **complementary international standards** adopted by multilateral organizations. This section is based on treaties ratified by Cuba, international declarations, regional regulations, as well as the principles enshrined in UN resolutions and European Union regulations, which make up a comprehensive legal corpus of protection against forced labor, contemporary slavery and inhumane treatment in prison contexts.

Forced or compulsory labor is prohibited under Articles 1, 3, 4 and 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, since every human being, by the mere fact of being human, has **"the right to liberty, the right to work and to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work"**.¹¹

For its part, the European Convention on Human Rights states in Article 4: **"No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. 2. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labor."**¹²

And Article 8 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: **"1. No one shall be held in slavery. Slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. 2. No one shall be held in servitude. 3. a) No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labor"**.¹³

The American Convention on Human Rights of 1969 (Pact of San José) also deals with this matter in Article 6, stating that: **"1. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and the slave trade and the traffic in women shall be prohibited in all its forms. 2. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labor."**¹⁴

The Forced Labor Convention of 1930, [signed by Cuba](#), defines in Article 2.1 the term forced or compulsory labor as **"any work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily"**.¹⁵ There are, therefore, two characterizing notes that qualify a work as "forced or compulsory": (a) [demand under threat](#) and, (b) [absence of voluntariness](#). **In Cuba there are many prisoners who are being subjected to forced or compulsory labor and, in addition, they perform this work in "slave" service.**

In this sense, the Judgment of October 20, 2016 issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Case of Workers of the Brasil Verde Farm VS Brazil), states: *"With respect to forced or compulsory labor, the Court reiterated its definition expressed in the Ituango Massacres Case, that it designates **any work or service required of an individual under threat of any penalty and for which said individual does not offer himself voluntarily**. This definition consists of two basic elements: **that the work or service is demanded "under threat of a penalty", and that it is carried out involuntarily**. Likewise, given the circumstances of the case, the Court considered that in order to constitute a violation of Article 6(2) of the Convention, it would be necessary that the alleged violation be attributable to agents of the State, either through their direct participation or acquiescence in the facts. In relation to the link with agents of the State, the Court considers that this criterion is restricted to the obligation to respect the prohibition of forced labor. But this criterion cannot be sustained when the alleged violation refers to the obligations of prevention and guarantee of a human right established in the American Convention, for which reason the attribution to agents of the State is not necessary to establish forced labor"*.¹⁶

The Abolition of Forced Labor Convention of 1957 states in Article "1: Each Member of the International Labor Organization which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labor:(a) as a means of political coercion or education or as a punishment for holding or expressing certain political opinions or for demonstrating ideological opposition to the established political, social or economic order; (b) as a method of mobilizing and utilizing labor for purposes of economic advancement; (c) as a measure of labor discipline; (d) as a punishment for having participated in strikes; (e) as a measure of racial, social, national or religious discrimination."¹⁷

Mention should also be made of the recent Resolution passed by the European Parliament on April 23, 2024, on the proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council banning products made with forced labor from the Union market, the purpose of which is to prohibit, as expressed in Article 1: **"economic**

¹¹ [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

¹² [European Convention on Human Rights](#)

¹³ [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights | OHCHR](#)

¹⁴ [American Convention on Human Rights of 1969 \(Pact of San José\)](#)

¹⁵ [Forced Labor Convention | OHCHR](#)

¹⁶ [Judgment of October 20, 2016 rendered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights \(Case of Workers of the Brasil Verde Farm VS Brazil\)](#)

¹⁷ [Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labor | OHCHR](#)

operators from introducing and placing on the Union market or exporting from the Union market products made with forced labor, with a view to improving the functioning of the internal market while contributing to the fight against forced labor".

Finally, the **Mandela Rules**, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, constitute the main international standard on the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. Regarding prison labor, articles 96 to 103 establish fundamental principles such as **voluntariness, usefulness for social reintegration, occupational safety and health, prior vocational training**, and the **prohibition of punitive or degrading work**.

According to these rules, inmates must not be forced to work under threat or punishment, nor be forced to perform tasks that exceed their physical capacity or dignity. In addition, they are entitled to **fair remuneration**, hygienic conditions, reasonable breaks and access to adequate means of protection.

The findings documented in this complaint report demonstrate that the Cuban prison system systematically fails to comply with all of the human rights principles listed in this section. The conditions described – absence of contracts, lack of security equipment, institutionalized coercion, denial of acquired prison rights to those who refuse to work, non-existent or symbolic salaries (less than \$4/month), threats or the use of violence, among many other violations documented in this complaint report – constitute a direct violation of these universal human rights standards.

It is exemplary and necessary to show a video of charcoal workers in which it is possible to see how the working conditions are typical of slavery, living in overcrowded conditions, without drinking water and outdoors:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIMlqM0p1Jc>

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON FORCED LABOR IN CUBA

Although no report with the depth of this complaint report has been produced to date, there are other institutions and organizations that have focused on forced labor in Cuba, and specifically in prisons. The following is a comprehensive list of references to reports, prosecutions and reports from rigorous sources on Cuba's forced labor violations against common or political prisoners. We have focused on documents that **explicitly or implicitly mention forced labor in prisons, such as strenuous labor without adequate pay, under threat or in inhumane conditions, in violation of ILO conventions**. These annual or specific reports also highlight systematic patterns of exploitation, often linked to overcrowded prisons, beatings and lack of access to grievance mechanisms.

UN and Human Rights Council Reports

- **A/HRC/57/46: Report on Contemporary Forms of Slavery** (2024, UN Human Rights Council). Link: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/57/46>. Prosecutions: Concern about state-imposed forced labor in Cuban prisons.
- **UN Committee against Torture Publishes Findings on Cuba** (2022, UN Human Rights Council). Link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/05/un-committee-against-torture-publishes-findings-cuba-iceland-iraq-kenya>. Prosecutions: Concern about systematic ill-treatment and torture in prisons; lack of access to complaint mechanisms.

ILO/ILO reports

- **Comments Adopted by the CEACR: Cuba** (Various years, 2005-2024, ILO). Enlace: https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=1000:13203:0::NO:13203:P13203_COUNTRY_ID:102603. Allegations: Government denies forced labor in prisons, claiming it is voluntary; however, NGOs report conditions amounting to forced labor; violations of C29 and C105, with testimonies of labor coercion.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) Reports

- **World Report 2024: Cuba** (2024, Human Rights Watch). Link: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/cuba/>. Prosecutions: Overcrowded prisons with systematic inhumane treatment.

- **World Report 2023: Cuba** (2023, Human Rights Watch). Link: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/cuba/>. Prosecutions: Systematic repression; poor prison conditions with multiple abuses.
- **Cuba: One Year After the Crackdown** (2004, Human Rights Watch). Link: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2004/03/17/cuba-one-year-after-crackdown/>. Prosecutions: Political prisoners face isolation and prison abuses.

IACHR/OAS Reports

- **2024 Annual Report: Cuba** (2024, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights). Link: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2024/chapters/IA2024_4B_CUB_EN.pdf. Prosecutions: Direct relationship between political and labor rights; systematic repression.
- **Labor and Union Rights in Cuba** (2023, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights). Link: https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/2023/cuba_derechoslaborales_en.pdf. Prosecutions: Non-compliance with ILO Conventions C29 and C105; testimonies of "forced laborers as slaves" without access to labor justice.

U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

These annual reports consistently document forced labor in Cuban prisons, such as agricultural labor without sufficient food and water, assaults on prisoners, and use of students in harvesting (assimilated to forced labor).

- **2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cuba** (2024, U.S. Department of State). Link: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>. Prosecutions: Credible reports of torture and inhumane treatment in prisons; prisoners subjected to forced labor, including backbreaking agricultural work without decent pay or protections; widespread impunity for abuses by prison officials.
- **2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cuba** (2023, U.S. Department of State). Link: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>. Prosecutions: Prisoners subjected to forced labor in agricultural work without adequate wages; government fails to provide fair payments to prisoners; use of students in rural harvesting in violation of international labor standards.
- **2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cuba** (2022, U.S. Department of State). Link: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>. Prosecutions: Identifies 15 patterns of mistreatment in prisons, including forced labor unrelated to sentencing; political prisoners face beatings and solitary confinement.
- **2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cuba** (2021, U.S. Department of State). Link: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>. Prosecutions: Detainees and prisoners suffer physical and sexual abuse; forced labor in prisons without effective grievance mechanisms.

U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Reports.

These annual reports highlight human trafficking and state-sponsored forced labor, with mentions of exploitation in prisons and coercive labor programs involving prisoners.

- **2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cuba** (2024, U.S. Department of State). Link: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/cuba/>. Allegations: Government fails to address labor trafficking; exploits citizens in forced labor, including coercive and threatening labor export programs; mentions official complicity in recruitment for conflicts (such as Ukraine), with implications for political prisoners.

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