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Thank you for the opportunity to amplify my voice to denounce the situation of human rights violations of where I come from, Cuba. I am 33 years old and have already served 4 sentences for the only reason that I have criticized the Cuban dictatorship through my art.

In Cuba, freedom of speech by artists is prohibited by Article 39 of the Constitution. According to this, "artistic creation is free **provided that its contents** is not contrary to the Revolution."

This means that the work of artists such as myself and my colleagues Gorki Águila and Tania Brugera, which is critical of the dictatory regime of the Castro brothers, is illegal in Cuba.

For that reason I served 2 years when I was 18; 1 year when I was 24; 10 months at age 31 and most recently 2 months at the age of 33.

Now I'll refer to the last two occasions in which I was in prison. On Christmas Day 2014, as part of a performance, I tried to release two little pigs on the streets of Havana, both painted in green, one with the name of Raul and the other with the name of Fidel. I called that performance "Animal Farm in memoriam" in honor of Gorge Orwell.

This cost me 10 months in prison. During that time I was tortured physically and psychologically by the dictatorship to the point that I declared myself on hunger strike and even considered the possibility of letting myself die in prison as a result.

After 10 months without previous warning, I was released and driven to my house from prison. Until today I have not been served any notice of pending criminal charges nor have I been summoned for any type of trial.

At that time I was released following my protests and my hunger strike in prison, and constant protests by my mother, my sister, my grandmother, friends, and international institutions such as the Human Rights Foundation, the Cuban American National Foundation, Amnesty International, etc.

These same friends and others came together again this last time I was in prison. I was in a maximum security prison in Havana for the simple crime of not having expressed any "sadness" over the death of dictator Fidel Castro.

On the night of December 26, when his death was announced, I was awakened by calls from friends and my sister.

I dressed quickly and when I left my house I could surely perceive fear as the streets became emptier and more silent.

That day I began to think over how many atrocities and how many crimes against humanity had been committed in more than 56 years by brothers Fidel and Raul Castro.

So I went out to the streets to shout "Take the streets, the murderer died, the mare died." I walked about a mile, took transportation to the other side of the city, and walked for a while celebrating until my video, that went viral on social media, was transmitted live as the only celebratory event in the city of Havana, and on the island.

In the video, by assuming my identity as a free person in a country controlled by a totalitarian dictatorship, I took the risky decision of graffitiing the wall of the hotel where Fidel Castro's troops were quartered for the first time in Havana almost 60 years ago, armed and without a democratic election.

I did that following the example of the great Vaclav Havel, the artist and former president of the Czech Republic, who advised all those who, like him, had to live under communist totalitarianism, to LIVE IN TRUTH. To stop pretending that the reality imposed by the regime by force is genuine. Upon the death of Fidel Castro, this notion would have meant that I should feel sad for the death of the dictator, as was pretended by thousands of people for fear of repression on that day.

That day, after walking through the city, I returned home. I was tired and went to bed when I was awakened by a noise that made me worry about my door. Then I saw a patrol car with a policeman and two other men in plain clothing, when I saw the owner of the house handing them the key to my door.

In the process I was able to call my fiancée, Alexandra Martinez, and I said, "Call everyone, they are taking me prisoner." The two of them threw themselves at me without even identifying themselves verbally and I received only insults and blows from these characters, because according to them, I had disrespected Fidel Castro.

And so I was taken to the police unit of La Lisa as they continued to hit me even after I got off, which did not stop my cries of "Murderers, yes the mare died, and good thing." When in the unit I asked: Do you know me? Have I done something to you? If I have not committed any crime, why do you beat me for my way of thinking? To which they only claimed "the laws support us."

This time the cost was 55 days in prison. At this time, I once again suffered physical and psychological torture, preventing me from seeing my family and my fiancée. I was transferred to 6 consecutive detention centers, including the high security prison "Combinado del Este."

Also at this time I was deprived of the right to be represented by a lawyer since my pro bono international attorney, Kimberly Motley, who had tried to visit me in Havana was arrested and immediately deported from Cuba.

Combinado del Este is a horrendous high security prison where only the most dangerous prisoners are sent. The roofs were rife with leaks, the 6x4 square meter cells were overcrowded for 36 people and bunk beds for 3, arranged in order to avoid the leaks. During the day the lights were off and although it was daytime the sunlight did not penetrate the bars.

On several occasions my jailers tried to terrorize me by threatening that at any time they could take me to the yard to execute me by firing squad.

I was very worried by this because I knew that could easily happen given the record of the hundreds if not thousands of political prisoners executed by the dictatorship.

I had to undergo all this abuse and humiliation for not shedding tears and for graffitiing "He's Gone" when an assassin died, one who with his brother, the current president of Cuba, Raul Castro, never allowed a different party to the one he created at gun point.

The Castro brothers and their family own the 3 newspapers, radio, TV, the only telephone company in Cuba which is the only one allowed to supply internet.

These gentlemen have remained in power during almost 60 years not only giving order to massacre Cubans such as those aboard Tugboat 13 de Marzo but also various attempts against Oswaldo Paya Sardiñas' life and his eventual murder, as well as that of Laura Pollán. The Castros not only divided all Cubans, but also made exiles of them, many of whom are in this country.

These characters contributed high numbers of mercenaries and arms, to the wars of Angola, Ethiopia, under the command of the Russian Army, the FARC in Colombia, and guerrillas in Venezuela in the 60s and in last two decades have supported the dictatorial Chavista regime, who today have plunged their people into hunger and oppression.

I want to close my presentation requesting two things to the people and the government of the United States. First, we request solidarity for the cause of democracy in Cuba, given that we have suffered a regime that does not allow democratic elections for almost 60 years. The world should give us solidarity and should ask Raul Castro for a plebiscite and democratic elections in Cuba.

And secondly, I ask the people and the government of the United States, to pressure Raul Castro's regime to release the thousands of political prisoners existent in my country. Due to the totalitarian system we Cubans live under, at least 85% of the present prison population would be considered innocent in any democratic country and would have never been sent to prison.

All Cubans are hostage of the Castro brothers' regime and the life of all Cubans, particularly artists, opponents, and dissidents, are under permanent danger at the hands of the repressive dictatorship.

Once again we need the solidarity of the United States and the support of all people of the world.