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From the IBPP Research Associates. Canada. Ismael Samba

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The following declaration has been provided by Mr. Ismael Samba. Mr. Samba is president of the Cuban Canadian National Foundation and Writer in Residence at York University, Canada. He can be reached as follows: Fax: 416 736 5899 or Tel: 416 736 2100 ext. 22244 or Email: Ismael@yorku.ca. Mr. Samba has published "A Dictator's Errors" in IBPP (Author: Ismael Samba, Volume 4, Number 25, June 26, 1998.)

Joint Declaration by the Committee of Cuban Political Ex-Prisoners and Cuba Friends and Cuban Canadian National Foundation Against The Laws That Persecute and Condemn Freedom in Cuba.

This February 15th, Fidel Castro's communist regime passed the "Law for the Protection of Cuban National Independence and Economy" which legalizes repressive actions against independent journalists, human rights activists and dissidents in Cuba. According to the stipulations of this law, passed by a group of marionettes that the regime calls National Assembly of People's Power, "direct collaboration or through a third party, with radio stations, television channels, newspapers, magazines or other mass media", will not be considered a simple crime but a crime that may be punished with a sentence of 20 years in prison and fines of up to \$100,000.00 pesos.

This January, six journalists were imprisoned in less than 10 days; others are serving prison sentences on charges of "disobedience", "false information" and/or "enemy propaganda", and have been deemed prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International. Many more may now be running the same risk if the international community, particularly, the world press, ignores this new affront of Castro's tyranny to the community of civilized nations. Let us put aside half-measures; we all know what communist dictatorships are capable of. It is necessary for the Canadian government, in its position as Cuba's main socio-economic ally, to be more objective in its analysis of what's occurring in Cuba and take drastic measures. This is the right time for prestigious mass media in this country and the whole world to show their solidarity, at least on a professional level, with men and women who had been so far, from inside Cuba, showing the world the other face of the coin, the neither official nor propagandistic angle of news. This has been and is the only crime committed by these dignified individuals. Now they will go to prison due to that arbitrary law that has just been passed in Cuba.

The centre left Italian newspaper La Republica had an editorial a few days ago, in which it referred to Cuba by saying that "a country that does not respect freedom of press has nothing to share with the consensus of democratic nations." Also, concerning the harassment suffered by independent journalists, the same editorial declared that "these provocations to good sense do not scandalize an international community that has decided to grant an undeserved credit to Fidel Castro." The Cuban magazine CONTACTO in California just stated in a crushing editorial about this law that "it is time that the international community admits that it has been manipulated by a regime that is repressive by nature and it is unfair that the Cuban people is, after 40 years, still suffering the silence of those that should be rightfully on their side, not on the side of repression."

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In this joint declaration the Committee of Cuban Political Ex-Prisoners and Cuba Friends and Cuban Canadian National Foundation expresses its repudiation against the persecution and imprisonment of independent journalists in Cuba. The Committee also makes an urgent call to the international community to protest against this atrocity and other laws that repress the dignity of the Cuban people in order to keep a totalitarian system in power--a system that has failed, a system that wants to justify its existence with the US blockade and that intends to keep ruining the country with the real blockade in existence: the internal blockade to all liberties. (Given in the City of Metropolitan Toronto, Canada, February 19th, 1999.) (Keywords: Canda, Cuba, Samba.)