



TRADE UNIONS FOR CUBA



Victory in the Courts for Miami Five Visa



An historic ruling by the Court of Appeal in November has opened the door for René González - and hopefully all of the Miami Five - to visit Britain, after twice being denied a visa

by the British government in 2014.

René's second invitation to Britain was issued by MPs, requesting that he attend a meeting in Parliament to discuss the case of the Miami Five. After the government denied him a visa, a group of MPs - including Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and shadow chancellor John McDonnell - appealed the decision by writing to judges to state that the Home Office was violating the European Convention on Human Rights.

In a unanimous decision, the Court of Appeal ruled that the refusals breached the freedom to receive and impart information under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The judges also refused to let the Home Office appeal against their decision at the Supreme Court.

Rob Miller, Cuba Solidarity Campaign Director, welcomed the news saying: "Campaigners in Britain celebrated the release of the final members of the Five in December 2014, but have had to sit back and watch them visit many other European countries including France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Norway, Russia, Italy, yet not Britain - a country where campaigners, trade unions and parliamentarians did so much to

support the international campaign for their release."



Steve Turner, **Unite** Assistant General Secretary said: "This is a great victory for the legislature against an overbearing executive, led by Cameron and May. René González represents no threat to national security, as claimed by the Government. It was right that we stood by René just as our union brothers and sisters around the globe stand up for UK workers in need. The political game-playing by the government who have tried to paint a decent man as a security threat has been appalling."

In a recorded message René González welcomed the court decision and said that the Five were looking forward to coming to Britain.

"I believe that the victory that we achieved in the courts is a reflection of all the support that we received from Britain ... We are looking forward to going there and to thank you personally to thank you, to show our appreciation and our gratitude" Watch the video online here:

<http://bit.ly/M5thankBritain>

Take Action!

CSC is currently organising a visit for 2016 with the legal team in the UK and with the Five in Cuba. To help and support the celebration in Britain please contact the CSC office on campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk

“Don’t disarm solidarity with Cuba”



CSC organised **Cuban Futures** in October, the first major conference in Britain on Cuba following the rapprochement between Cuba and the US. **Cuban Futures** examined the major threats and challenges facing Cuba today and the role of the international solidarity movement in this changing environment.

Arleen Rodriguez, prominent Cuban TV journalist said, “Media spin makes the world think the blockade is over; don’t let this disarm the global solidarity movement. Just as in the case of the Five, the blockade will only be defeated by Cuban resistance and global solidarity. The solidarity campaign must continue working. Be very, very alert to the manoeuvres which could be taken against Cuba. The United States still intends to bring us to our knees. Before it was by aggression and now it is by seduction.”

Brian Wilson, former UK minister, said “Let nobody tell you that the blockade is over... everywhere you turn there are obstructions. The British government has been complicit in that and continues to be complicit, not necessarily pro-actively, but reactively, in refusing to do anything that cuts across American foreign policy and American objectives. No British bank will go near Cuba as they are in fear of American sanctions.”

For an extended report, videos, photos, transcripts, presentations and more resources from Cuban Futures please visit: <http://bit.ly/CubanFuturesResources>

The US has “changed its tactics, not its goals”



The US has “changed its tactics, not its goals”, warned H.E. Teresita Vicente, Cuban Ambassador at the sold-out 2015 Latin America Conference in London. The threat of US intervention in Cuba continues, Dr Steve Ludlam from the University of Sheffield warned, suggesting that the trade union movement in Cuba is under threat from the US; “Barack Obama has publicly supported the idea of breakaway unions”, he said.

OH Parsons Lawyer Steve Cottingham contrasted the labour rights in Cuba and Britain; “In Cuba there is the right to work, the right to paid study leave for training, 30 days annual leave plus 10 public holidays - and there is no such thing as zero hour contracts!” he said.



NUT

Christine Blower, General Secretary of the **National Union of Teachers**, spoke of

her delight at the freedom of the Miami Five since last year’s conference “but so much more needs to be done”, she said, “we must continue to fight to end the blockade”.



Diana Holland, **Unite** Assistant General Secretary and CSC Chair urged friends of Latin America to “maintain vigilance as well as

solidarity – we must never forget the coup in Chile” in light of continued interference and destabilisation tactics from the US. For a full report visit: <http://bit.ly/LAConf2015>

Co-op Bank unilaterally closes CSC bank accounts



THE Co-op Bank has closed all the bank accounts of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign.

CSC wrote to the bank on a number of occasions for an explanation but has only been told that the closure is due to the Co-op Bank "changing its risk appetite".

CSC director Rob Miller said: "We have banked with the Co-op for over 20 years and the bank was chosen as it presented itself as an 'ethical' bank linked to community and human rights organisations. Their recent unilateral action has jeopardised our finances and our campaigning capacity.

"We find their actions unethical, unacceptable and damaging. CSC makes regular banking transactions to and from Cuba. We view the Co-op's action against CSC as discriminatory towards Cuba and the people of Cuba.

"We have not ruled out taking legal action against the Co-op to get full disclosure regarding the reasons for their actions, and to seek compensation for the effects of these sudden and discriminatory closures."

Take Action!

Write to the Co-op to protest at their decision. For a sample letter visit: <http://bit.ly/Coopletter>

Sign the Save Our Bank petition: <http://bit.ly/38degreesCoop>

Celebrate May Day in Cuba in 2016

Would you like to attend, by special invitation, the inspiring May Day Rally addressed by Raúl Castro and joined by over 1 million Cubans in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución?

May Day study tour: 28 April – 10 May 2016

May Day is one of the highlights of the Cuban political calendar and you can take part in both the huge May Day Rally and the International Solidarity Conference in Havana the following day. Our tours include meetings with the **CTC** (Cuban TUC), **FMC** (Federation of Cuban Women) and other mass organisations. There will be opportunities to meet and discuss current issues with Cuban workers with visits to hospitals, schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Young Trade Unionists' Brigade (aimed at 18-35s, open to all): **28 April – 10 May 2016**

Join hundreds of activists from across the world on an international camp near Havana. Brigadistas carry out early morning agricultural and manual work, where they experience first-hand the struggle of life under the US blockade, which denies the Cubans access to basic machinery and goods; plus visits, workshops, conferences, discussions and much more!




Take Action!


Sign up to visit Cuba for May Day on the study tour or young trade unionists' brigade! For up to date prices and more details, visit <http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk/tours/>

Trade Union News Round-Up

TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady spoke at the CSC Fringe meeting at the **TUC Congress 2015** where she expressed the importance of “Friendship and solidarity between working people” and expressed her solidarity with Cuba on behalf of the TUC.

Baroness Angela Smith, Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords, and Vice-Chair of CSC, told delegates at the **Labour Party** fringe meeting how the blockade remains in place and continues to be the biggest issue affecting Cuba’s development: “Obama has now said the blockade is wrong. It’s failed Cuba, it’s failed the United States; it doesn’t satisfy anyone except Miami.”

 Tony Burke, **Unite** Assistant General Secretary, spoke of the role of the trade union movement in the struggle to release the Miami Five, including the work of **Unite** and **United Steelworkers Union** in North America, who worked so tirelessly in the campaign, and how this solidarity can be helped to achieve victories in other campaigns.


 Cuban teachers from the University of Medical Sciences in Havana visited Edinburgh University, with support from the **National Union of Teachers** to study an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) course, in order to learn the professional skills needed to teach English to Cuban medical internationalists.

In this practical form of solidarity from the **NUT**, previous Cuban teachers have returned home to teach English to Cuban healthcare personnel who have then gone on to work on international missions in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia, including the Ebola outbreak in West Africa last year.

With thanks to our affiliates:



CSC hosted Cuba-themed social nights at the **Unite Rules Conference** in Brighton and the **NAPO AGM** in Eastbourne, where delegates enjoyed Omar Puente and the Raices Cubanas; a ten piece salsa band and Havana Club rum cocktails.

 Jorge Luis Garcia, the political counsellor at the Cuban Embassy in Britain spoke at the **NAPO AGM** in Eastbourne, where he told delegates that the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US and the removal of Havana from Washington’s list of state sponsors of terrorism, “are steps in the right direction, but these measures are limited in their scope, as the blockade remains in place.”

Welcome on board to our new affiliates! We are appealing for new trade union affiliations to join us in the campaign to end the US blockade once and for all. Recent new affiliates include: **CWU Portsmouth and District Postal branch, RMT Liverpool 5, Unison branches; Dudley Group of Hospitals, East Dunbartonshire, Environment Agency Southern Region Branch, Goldsmiths University, Lanarkshire Health Branch, North Somerset Royal Devon & Exeter Health Branch, Sefton Local Government, Western Isles Local Government, Unite branches; Basingstoke SE/6245, Bristol Retired Members, Durham Geographical NE/GEO/29, Durham RTC Sectoral Branch, GE Aviation Bishops Cleeve & Arle Court, NE/300-29, Nissan 200/07, St Helens Central 0865 and Taunton Area Activist Committee.**

Take Action!

Affiliate your branch to CSC by contacting campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk or online here: <http://bit.ly/JoinAffiliateCSC>