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Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

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15 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has refused to allow a group of women to travel to Europe to receive a top human rights prize. The "Ladies in White" are winners of this year's Sakharov prize for freedom of thought. The European Union, which gives the annual award, has repeatedly asked Cuba's government to give the women travel visas. Their requests have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, the EU may send its own representatives to Cuba to present the award. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 for the release of their husbands and sons from prison. The men are guilty only of criticizing Fidel Castro.

EU politicians are angry over the refusal to issue visas to the women. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering said: "I call on the Cuban authorities to let them depart. If they do not, we will...again harshly criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the planet." A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, said her government, "does with our lives whatever it wishes." She added: "It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any opinion other than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been striving for our rights." Havana has remained tight-lipped about the prize and travel ban.

WARM-UPS

1. CUBA SEARCH: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about Cuba. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting. Would you like to travel to or live in Cuba?

2. PROTEST: What do you think is the best way of protesting against a government? In pairs / groups, talk about the following methods of protesting. Would they be successful in your country? What would your government do? Which would you take part in?

- Silent street protests
- Industrial action
- Written petitions
- Armed resistance
- Hunger strikes
- Street riots
- Campaigns on the Internet
- Sit-ins in government buildings

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Cuba / Europe / prizes / human rights / Fidel Castro / being deaf / protesting / travel bans / visas / Communism / dictatorships / bravery / opinions / silence

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. FREEDOMS: Do you live in a free country? Do you think there should be greater freedom in your country? Write down five things you are free to do in your country that you think are important. Talk about these with your partner(s). Talk also about what life would be like without these things.

5. PROTEST OPINIONS: Discuss these opinions with your partner(s).

- a. I would never care enough to protest against my government.
- b. People in the world need to protest against their government more often.
- c. All governments will break the law to stop people protesting.
- d. Non-violent protests are the best.
- e. People who live in dictatorships should join together and fight their government.
- f. The bravest people in the world are those who protest against dictators.
- g. All of the world's people will have basic human rights one day.
- h. The world does too little to defend human rights.

6. FREEDOM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with freedom. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

7. COMPARISONS: Make comparisons between these countries. They are often in the news because of human rights issues:

Cuba China North Korea Zimbabwe Chile USA Russia Sudan

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Fidel Castro has given a lot of land to some Cuban campaigners. | T / F |
| b. Cuba has refused to give visas to a group called the "Men in White". | T / F |
| c. The EU is thinking about sending representatives to Cuba. | T / F |
| d. Many Cuban men are in prison in Cuba for criticizing America. | T / F |
| e. European politicians are angry about Fidel Castro's decisions. | T / F |
| f. A German politician called Cuba a fascist dictatorship. | T / F |
| g. A Cuban campaigner attacked Cuba over the lack of freedom there. | T / F |
| h. The activist said people are just striving for their rights. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| a. refused | yearly |
| b. top | pushing |
| c. annual | disapproving of |
| d. representatives | ask |
| e. criticizing | delegates |
| f. call on | declined |
| g. depart | voice |
| h. opinion | silent |
| i. striving | leading |
| j. tight-lipped | leave |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. refused to | from prison |
| b. receive a top | on deaf ears |
| c. Their requests have fallen | to issue visas to the women |
| d. the EU may send its own | for our rights |
| e. the release of their husbands and sons | dictatorships on the planet |
| f. angry over the refusal | allow a group of women to travel |
| g. I call on the Cuban | other than its own |
| h. one of the last Communist | representatives to Cuba |
| i. It won't allow any opinion | authorities to let them depart |
| j. we have just been striving | human rights prize |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has refused to _____ a group of women to travel to Europe to receive a _____ human rights prize. The "Ladies in White" are winners of this year's Sakharov prize for _____ of thought. The European Union, which gives the annual award, has _____ asked Cuba's government to give the women travel visas. Their _____ have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, the EU may send its own representatives to Cuba to _____ the award. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 for the _____ of their husbands and sons from prison. The men are _____ only of criticizing Fidel Castro.

requests
freedom
release
allow
guilty
top
repeatedly
present

EU politicians are _____ over the refusal to issue visas to the women. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering said: "I call on the Cuban authorities to let them _____. If they do not, we will...again _____ criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the _____." A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, said her government, "does with our lives _____ it wishes." She added: "It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any opinion _____ than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been _____ for our rights." Havana has remained _____ about the prize and travel ban.

other
tight-lipped
angry
harshly
whatever
depart
planet
striving

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has _____ to allow a group of women to travel to Europe to receive a _____ human rights prize. The "Ladies in White" are winners of this year's Sakharov prize for freedom of _____. The European Union, which gives the annual award, has repeatedly asked Cuba's government to give the women travel visas. Their requests have _____ on deaf ears. Instead, the EU may send its own representatives to Cuba to present the _____. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 for the _____ of their husbands and sons from prison. The men are _____ only of criticizing Fidel Castro.

EU politicians are angry over the _____ to issue visas to the women. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering said: "I _____ the Cuban authorities to let them depart. If they do not, we will...again _____ criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the planet." A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, said her government, "does with our lives whatever it _____." She added: "It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any _____ other than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been _____ for our rights." Havana has remained tight-_____ about the prize and travel ban.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'ladies'** and **'white'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "HUMAN RIGHTS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about our freedoms and human rights. Include questions about countries that take away people's human rights.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| • refused | • angry |
| • winners | • depart |
| • repeatedly | • planet |
| • ears | • controls |
| • 2003 | • opinion |
| • Fidel Castro | • striving |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Cuba?
- c. Why do you think governments take away people's human rights?
- d. Do you think all governments in the world are guilty of human rights abuses?
- e. Which countries do you think are the biggest abusers of human rights?
- f. Do you think the Ladies in White should receive a bigger prize?
- g. What is the most dangerous thing you would do to defend your rights or your family's rights?
- h. What do you think of groups like Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch?
- i. Where are the biggest abuses of human rights taking place in the world today?
- j. What will happen in Cuba after Fidel Castro dies?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Why do you think the Cuban government is not allowing the Ladies in White to travel to Europe?
- d. How would you feel if your government stopped you from leaving your country?
- e. Is it OK for a government to stop people from leaving the country for special reasons?
- f. Do you think the EU can get Cuba's government to change its mind and let the women to travel?
- g. What do you think of governments that put people in prison for criticizing its actions?
- h. What human rights abuses are there in your country?
- i. Have your words ever fallen on deaf ears?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

LUCKY? In pairs / groups, talk about the human rights listed below (one of them is not an official right!). Discuss what life would be like without these rights. Put your main points in the middle column. Discuss what your life is like having these rights. Put your thoughts in the right hand column.

RIGHT	LIFE WITHOUT	LIFE WITH
The freedom to travel and hold a passport.		
Not being tortured.		
The freedom to study English.		
Being equal before the law without any discrimination.		
The right to rest and leisure.		
The right to work in a job that you can choose.		

- Change partners and explain what you discussed.
- Talk about how (un)lucky you are to (not) enjoy these basic human rights.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Ladies in White. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. STUDENT RIGHTS: Make a list of student rights (students of English or other languages and subjects). Think of eight basic rights that all students must have. Give an explanation supporting each point. Show your lists to your classmates in the next lesson. Whose points are best?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Fidel Castro asking him why his government refuses to allow the Ladies in White to travel. Give him advice on the benefits to Cuba of letting the women go to Europe. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. F e. T f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| a. refused | declined |
| b. top | leading |
| c. annual | yearly |
| d. representatives | delegates |
| e. criticizing | disapproving of |
| f. call on | ask |
| g. depart | leave |
| h. opinion | voice |
| i. striving | pushing |
| j. tight-lipped | silent |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| a. refused to | to issue visas to the women |
| b. receive a top | human rights prize |
| c. Their requests have fallen | on deaf ears |
| d. the EU may send its own | representatives to Cuba |
| e. the release of their husbands and sons | from prison |
| f. angry over the refusal | allow a group of women to travel |
| g. I call on the Cuban | authorities to let them depart |
| h. one of the last Communist | dictatorships on the planet |
| i. It won't allow any opinion | other than its own |
| j. we have just been striving | for our rights |

GAP FILL:

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has refused to **allow** a group of women to travel to Europe to receive a **top** human rights prize. The "Ladies in White" are winners of this year's Sakharov prize for **freedom** of thought. The European Union, which gives the annual award, has **repeatedly** asked Cuba's government to give the women travel visas. Their **requests** have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, the EU may send its own representatives to Cuba to **present** the award. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 for the **release** of their husbands and sons from prison. The men are **guilty** only of criticizing Fidel Castro.

EU politicians are **angry** over the refusal to issue visas to the women. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering said: "I call on the Cuban authorities to let them **depart**. If they do not, we will...again **harshly** criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the **planet**." A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, said her government, "does with our lives **whatever** it wishes." She added: "It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any opinion **other** than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been **striving** for our rights." Havana has remained **tight-lipped** about the prize and travel ban.