



January 17, 2020

The Honorable Sam D. Brownback
Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Subject: Anti-Semitic Activities of Government Officials in Communist Cuba;
Matter of Liusdán Martínez Lescaille

Dear Ambassador Brownback,

I am writing to alert you to a disturbing series of anti-Semitic attacks against Mr. Olainis Tejada and his family; a Sephardic Jewish family in Camagüey, Cuba. This appears to be part of a sophisticated island-wide crackdown on people of faith that started during the prior U.S. administration. Further, just last week, an independent lawyer we support who was helping the Tejada family, was subjected to an unlawful search and seizure of his home because of his contact with the Tejadas.

What started as schoolyard bullying incident over the kippah has since escalated into a series of anti-Semitic acts by regime officials, including harassment by Rapid Response Brigades.¹ Mr. Tejada Beltrán's eldest son, Liusdán Martínez Lescaille, has been instructed by Cuba's Ministry of Education that he must stop wearing a kippah to school. If they fail to comply, Liusdán's parents have been threatened with imprisonment by Communist Party apparatchiks. This matter is similar to the case of the Rigal family currently in prison for homeschooling their children.²

Some of what has been done to Liusdán is typical of the socialist indoctrination of children whose family holds views contrary to the system. For example, it seems Liusdán's fellow students were encouraged by school officials to bully him. According to the family, Liusdán was called a "damn Jew" and other anti-Semitic slurs. On several

¹ For more information on Cuba's Rapid Response Brigade system visit:
<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ab3210.html>.

² For more information see <https://hslida.org/content/legal/cases/rigal/> and <https://adncuba.com/english/us-secretary-state-pompeo-urged-sanction-cuban-officials-religious-freedom-crackdown>.

occasions, Liusdán's kippah was forcibly removed and desecrated, in addition to, other physical altercations. Every time Liusdán's parents complained to the school officials about the unlawful discrimination, and safety concerns, the incidents appear to have increased.

After several weeks of harassment, school officials referred the matter to a special Commission of the regional school district. Comprised of Communist Party members, the Commission grilled Liusdán's parents on at least two occasions about their Jewish faith and faith-based lifestyle. The Commission ultimately decided that the incidents were Liusdán's fault. Rather than reprimand the bullies and school officials for unlawful discrimination and endangering the life of the child, Liusdán's parents were instructed that Liusdán had to remove the kippah because it violated the regime's school uniform regulations.

On December 17, 2019, Liusdán's father, Mr. Tejada, attempted to file a religious discrimination complaint with the regional prosecutor. The prosecutor's office accepted the documents but refused to provide proof of service (a common practice that, in essence, it is as if the claim had never been filed). Shortly thereafter, the family tried to drop their children off at school and were "greeted" by regional Ministry of Education officials who told them Liusdán could not enter the school as long as he wore the kippah. Mr. Tejada believes a Rapid Response Brigade was also at the school video recording of the event.³

As documented in the Annual International Religious Freedom report, Cuba's new Constitution, adopted in 2019, prohibits discrimination based on religion. However, those clauses, as with much of Cuba's legal system, are a farce. The laws and regulations are used to both pay lip service to religious liberty and persecute those who opt to exercise this most fundamental right. There is no due process in Cuba. The Communist Party apparatus has weaponized the legal system to repress anyone who stands in the way of, as the Constitution says, the construction of a Communist society. Even the independent lawyers who dare speak up in defense of people of faith, as this case shows, are also targeted by the regime.

It is difficult to fathom that twenty-nine years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Cuba is one of the few nations in the world with an East German Stasi-like religion

³ Cuba's Rapid Response Brigades, are violent street mobs similar to Nazi Germany's Brown Shirts, which are made up of community organizers who, at the direction of the Communist Party, intimidate, harass, and if needed, harm and beat citizens who refuse to abide by Communist party edicts and rules.

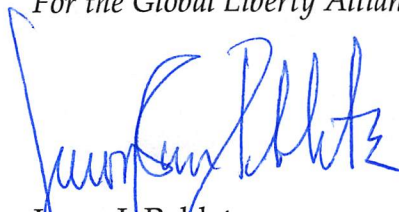
police: the Office of Religious Affairs ("ORA"). Mr. Tejada, his son Liusdán, are the latest targets of the ORA. More victims will follow. A team of independent lawyers and civil society leaders will defend them as best they can under the circumstances. However, without U.S. and global attention and public outcry, we are concerned that this family will meet the same fate as other people of faith who have been unlawfully deprived of liberty, arbitrarily detained, physically assaulted and worse.

While Communist Cuba's war on religion has been waged since 1959, and perfected every year since, people of faith are rebelling against the discrimination and persecution. The United States should do everything possible to raise awareness of the Liusdán case and urge responsible nations to do the same. Companies doing business in Cuba should be made aware of these and other instances of religious discrimination to avoid being complicit in the perpetuation of the Cuban regime's anti-Semitism.

As soon as the independent lawyers in Cuba update the Global Liberty Alliance on this matter, we can provide you and your team an update. Thank you for all your efforts, and those of the Trump administration, to advance the global defense of fundamental rights and justice for the victims.

Sincerely,

For the Global Liberty Alliance



Jason I. Poblete
Co-Founder and Chief Counsel

Cc: Mr. Elan S. Carr, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism
U.S. Department of State

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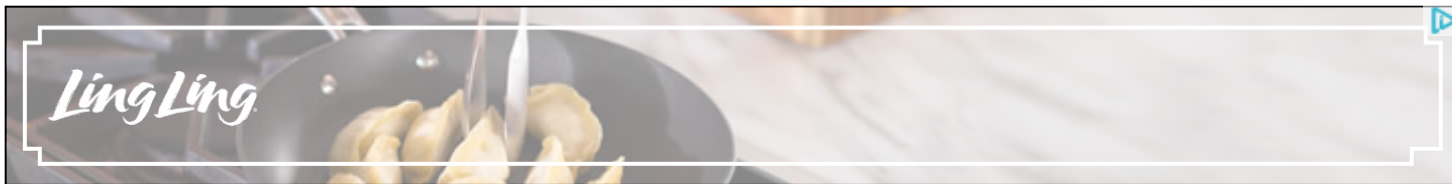
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THE GLOBAL LIBERTY ALLIANCE DEFENDS JEWISH FAMILY IN CUBA FROM THE REGIME'S ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS

Posted on January 2, 2020 by [globallibertydefense](#)



The Cuban regime is one of the worst offenders of religious liberty in the Western Hemisphere. Two months ago, the Global Liberty Alliance (GLA) received disturbing reports about a series of anti-Semitic attacks against a Sephardic Jewish family in Camagüey, Cuba. After Havana, Camagüey is Cuba's third-largest city and is located in the central part of the island.

Working with independent lawyers in lawyers, in December 2019 the GLA started supporting and advising the Tejada family. Based on preliminary reports from the independent lawyers and the family, it appears that what started as an apparent schoolyard bullying incident over the kippah, may have been part of a coordinated intimidation anti-semitic campaign. The matter took on a more serious tone a few weeks ago when a Rapid Response Brigade appears to have been mobilized against the parents.

At this juncture, Mr. Olainis Tejada Beltrán's eldest son, Liusdán Martínez Lescaille, has been instructed by Cuba's Ministry of Education that he must stop wearing a kippah to school. If the Tejada family fails to comply with the government's latest orders, Liusdán's parents have been told by Communist Party apparatchiks that they could face fines and prison times. This case is similar to the pattern of attack used against the Rigal family in Guantanamo. Christians, the parents are currently in prison for homeschooling their children. You can learn more about the Rigal matter [here](#) and [here](#).

"Religious liberty is incompatible with socialist thinking. The regime's puppet lawyers and officials use legal technicalities and regulations to repress religious liberty. Mr. Tejada and his family are being put through the system to teach them a lesson; however, independent lawyers and civil society leaders have, and will, come to their defense. We will have their backs," said Jason Poblete, GLA Chief Counsel.

The GLA has been in contact with U.S. government officials and policymakers about the Tejada matter along with other religious persecution cases. In the near future, the GLA will release more details about how Cuba's religious police – the Office of Religious Affairs – is supporting Communist Party efforts to repressing religious freedom on the island. We will also provide an update on the Tejada matter. In the meantime, you can learn more about the Tejada's case by reading this story in the [Jerusalem Post](#).

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Cuban child banned from wearing kippah following violent school bullying

After complying, the prosecutor informed the family that continued action could result in the loss of their right to guardianship over their children.

By [ZACHARY KEYSER](#) DECEMBER 30, 2019 07:33



Parents Olainis Tejada Beltrán and Yeliney Lescaille Prebal with their two children (photo credit: Courtesy)

A twelve-year-old boy and his brother are currently being prohibited by Cuban educational authorities from entering their school while wearing their *kippot* following the onslaught of continuous beatings from fellow schoolmates.

The boy, Liusdan Martínez Lescaille, received the notice that he was forbidden to wear his *kippah* in school by Nuevitas Municipal Director of Education Osdeini Hernández Navarro on December 11 - reportedly due to inaction by the school's security personnel to prevent the boy from repeatedly being attacked - claiming that

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the school and the educational authorities do not have the means to protect the boy, according to Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

Lescaille's parents, Olainis Tejada Beltrán and Yeliney Lescaille Prebal, members of the Sephardic Bnei Anusim community in Cuba, claim that the ridicule began in September of 2019 after their son started school at the Latin America Urban Basic Secondary School in Nuevitas and since then the boy has been "subjected to four severe beatings" from conflicts brought upon by classmates.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo added Cuba to the State Department's Special Watch List on December 20, which monitors governments that have "engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom" in the past. Bullying at school, stemming from personal religious practices, is highly prevalent and relatively common in Cuba.

Following the denouncement of his son's treatment through independent media outlets, Beltran attempted to form a commission to review the situation, considering the family had no other educational alternatives. During the endeavor, Beltran was pressured by educational authorities to retract his statements on multiple occasions - with authorities even going so far as threatening to expel the boy for "supposed acts of violence," before five teachers stepped in to defend the child.

On December 11, it was announced that the educational authorities found the security guard guilty of failing to act when these beatings occurred - however, instead of the guard receiving punishment, the school decided to put a ban on the child wearing the *kippah*.

On December 17, the boy and his brother unsuccessfully attempted to enter the school while wearing their *kippot* - only to be turned away at the door.

The next day, municipal prosecutor Ismaray Vidal Marques issued a court summons requesting Beltran and Prebal to appear in his office by 10 a.m. the next day to review next steps.

After complying, the prosecutor informed the family that continued action could result in the loss of their right to guardianship over their children; in addition, prison sentences could be tacked on for "threatening their children's normal development."

"It is unconscionable that a child would be subjected to serious physical assault with no action taken by school officials whose duty it is to protect all children in their care, regardless of their religious beliefs. The fact that the educational authorities in Nuevitas have chosen to punish two children by closing the school doors to them unless they suppress their religious identity, rather than to hold to account those responsible for the attacks on him is illustrative of a more general

hostility to religion within the Cuban school system," CSW's Head of Advocacy Anna-Lee Stangl said.

"We welcome the US State Department's decision to put Cuba on the Special Watchlist for severe violations of religious freedom and call on the Cuban government to immediately take action to allow Liusdan, Daniel Moises, and other children like them who hold strong religious beliefs to continue their education without hindrance. We also call for the authorities to cease their harassment of Mr Tejada Beltrán and Mrs Lescaille Prebal and to drop any legal case against them. Religious discrimination within Cuban schools cannot be permitted to continue."

Tags [cuba](#) [kippah](#)

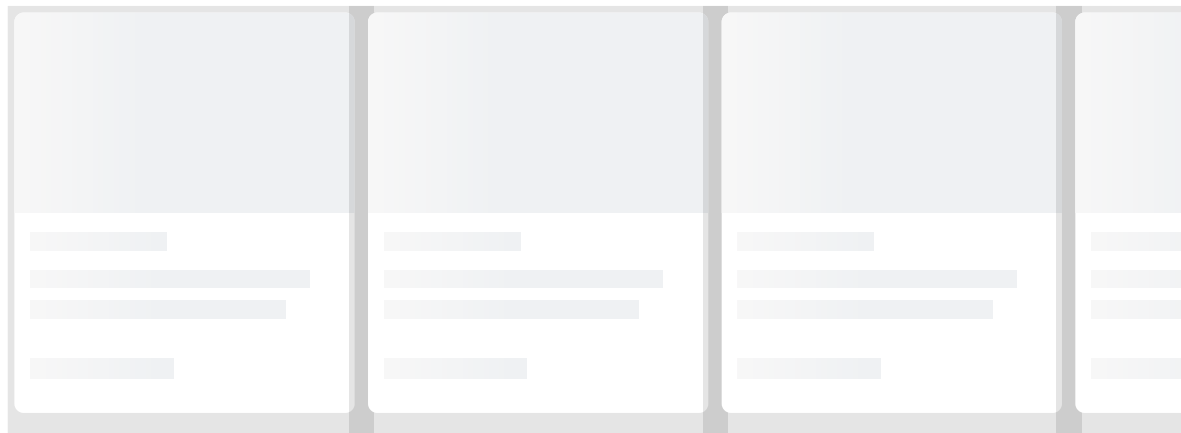
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