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One Hundred Thirteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Committee on Foreign Affairs
256 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

April 9, 2013

Dear Mr. Shawn Carter and Mrs. Beyoncé Knowles-Carter,

We are writing to express our deep concerns over the precedent and implications of your trip to Havana, Cuba. As you are aware, the U.S. maintains strict travel bans to this Caribbean island, not as a punishment to the Cuban people, but as a matter of solidarity for all those who are living under the oppressive Castro regime. While you were touring the island on a well-publicized holiday, were you aware of the following pervasive human rights violations?

1. The wrongful imprisonment of USAID contractor Alan Gross since 2009, who was merely helping the small Cuban Jewish community access the internet.¹
2. The oppressive use of violence against women, in particular the Ladies in White for their demand for Freedom of Speech.^{2,3}
3. The defection of ballet dancers seeking artistic freedom without limitation and fear of persecution.⁴
4. The attempted censorship and suppression of Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez.⁵
5. The ever increasing number of political prisoners being held for expressing views opposing the Castro regimes reign.⁶

These are just a few examples of the Castro government's oppression and the dire living conditions faced by the Cuban people. The list of human rights violations demonstrates that this

¹ <http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=88801>

² <http://www.capitolhillcubans.com/2013/03/the-stoning-of-ladies-in-white.html>

³ <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/03/29/3313747/three-cuban-women-speak-out.html>

⁴ <http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/04/05/seven-cuban-ballet-dancers-defect-to-the-u-s-and-mexico/>

⁵ <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/03/31/3316874/cuban-blogger-yoani-sanchez-to.html>

⁶ <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/01/22/3195496/cuban-human-rights-group-number.html>

is an organized and systematic oppression of Cuban nationals. Regardless of your intentions, your visit will clearly be used by the Castro regime as a propaganda tool. We are deeply disappointed with your decision to holiday on the island and thereby seeming to condone this oppression. It is important to note that tourism to Cuba does not benefit the Cuban economy or people, but the Castro regime. We sincerely hope that you will reevaluate your decision and distance yourselves from this repressive regime and instead stand on the side of the Cuban people who seek freedom and access to basic human rights protections and economic opportunity.

Sincerely,



Matt Salmon
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere



Albio Sires
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere



Ron DeSantis
Member
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere