



By: TA | AP Brief

Cuba releasing prisoners as the US pressures the island's government



The Cuban government said Thursday it would release 2,010 prisoners in a move that comes while the Trump administration puts extreme pressure on the island's government with a suffocating oil blockade.

The announcement said the pardons were a "humanitarian gesture" in connection with Holy Week and didn't mention mounting pressures with the U.S.

The government said the prisoners affected are foreigners and Cubans, including women, the elderly and young people. It didn't say when they were being released or under what conditions, nor did it mention the crimes they were accused of committing.

Authorities also provided no details on whether any of those pardoned were protesters convicted and sentenced for terrorism, contempt or public disorder.

Cuba's government denies holding political prisoners, but the activist group Prisoners Defended registered 1,214 people imprisoned for political reasons in Cuba as of February.

Cuban authorities said the decision "was based on a careful analysis of the characteristics of the crimes committed by those sanctioned, their good behavior in prison, having served a significant portion of their sentence, and their health status," according to a statement published in state media.

Extreme pressure on Cuba's government

The release comes as the Trump administration has placed extreme pressure on Cuba's government, imposing an oil blockade for months that has fueled blackouts and left many civilians suffering.

Cuba periodically frees prisoners at key moments.

In January last year, Cuba's government released 553 prisoners as part of talks with the

Vatican, a day after the Biden administration announced its intent to [lift the U.S. designation](#) of the island nation as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Last month, Cuba released 51 people from the island's prisons

Last month, [Cuba released 51 people](#) from the island's prisons in an unexpected move that officials said stems from a spirit of goodwill and close relations with the Vatican.

The government said Thursday's announcement was the fifth prisoner release since 2011, and that it has freed more than 11,000 people.

The announcement come just months after the U.S. deposed ex-Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and pressured that nation's government to make radical changes, including [releasing prisoners](#) detained for political reasons and passing an amnesty law.