

Cuba releases 127 prisoners



Pope Francis and Raúl Castro (Source: [Calixto N. Llanes/Commons](#))

As part of an [agreement with the United States](#) brokered by the Vatican, Cuba has released 127 prisoners in recent days. As the AFP news agency [reports](#), the well-known dissident [José Daniel Ferrer](#), who had already been imprisoned between 2003 and 2011 and was arrested again on July 11, 2021, is among those already released.

In return for the planned early release of 553 prisoners, outgoing US President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday that he would remove Cuba from the list of terror supporters and lift further sanctions imposed by his predecessor Donald Trump. Although both sides have not officially established a link between the releases and Biden's move, a deal brokered by the Vatican is considered likely.

The Vatican welcomed the releases as part of the “Holy Year 2025” proclaimed by the Catholic Church. As in previous cases, the Pope was informed directly by President Miguel Díaz-Canel, according to a [statement from the Cuban Foreign Ministry](#). In recent years, there have been several meetings between the Cuban government and Pope Francis. For many years, Cuba has maintained good relations with the Vatican, which mediated between Havana and Washington in the run-up to the diplomatic thaw under Barack Obama.

Representatives of the Supreme Court emphasized that the prisoners in question were accused of “various crimes” and that individual case reviews were carried out after part of the sentence had been served on the basis of criteria such as age, illnesses, etc. They explicitly stated that this was not an amnesty, but an early release from prison – which means that the individuals could be imprisoned again if they came into conflict with the law.

In addition, Havana emphasized that early releases on humanitarian grounds after serving at least a third of a prison sentence are regularly carried out as part of the country's legal

practice and that a total of 10,000 people have been released early on the island between 2023 and 2024 as part of this. However, many of those released now are likely to be among those arrested during the [protests on July 11, 2021](#) and are considered by NGOs such as Amnesty International to be political cases. AFP reports that “most” of those released now were convicted in this context. ([Cubaheute](#))