

Protests in Caimanera



Protests on the evening of May 6 in Caimanera, Guantánamo (Source: [Infobae/Twitter](#)).

On Saturday, the first major anti-government protests of the year [took place](#) in the eastern Cuban city of Caimanera (Guantánamo province). [Videos](#) shared by dissident groups on social media show several dozen protesters apparently marching outside the municipal office of the Communist Party (PCC) in the early evening, chanting slogans such as "Freedom" and "Down with Communism." Footage after dark showed units in olive green uniforms clashing with the crowd, resulting in violent clashes and five arrests.

As a result of the protests, a temporary shutdown of the Internet in Cuba occurred around 9 p.m. Since the nationwide protests of July 11, 2021, which were preceded by a Twitter campaign launched in Argentina under the hashtag "SOSCuba," temporary Internet shutdowns have become the norm in Cuba, even during local protests. Officially, the internet outage was attributed to a temporary overload.

In a [statement](#) released on Tuesday, the local government declared that "several drunken individuals," who "with the clear intention of disrupting public order" had "refused to engage in civilized dialogue" as the starting point, necessitated "police action." Legal action was announced against those involved, while at the same time the text stressed the "duty of public officials" to "maintain a constant dialogue with the population" as well as to "answer and solve as much as possible the problems that affect the quality of life of our residents [...]." State media also spoke of local police being overwhelmed with the situation. The United States Embassy in Cuba criticized on [Twitter](#) the "violent response of the security forces" to the protests.

The town of Caimanera, population 11,000, is located at the southern end of the province just a few kilometers from the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay and is nicknamed the "First Anti-Imperialist Trench" (span: Primera trinchera antiimperialista). As reported by the

opposition news portal 14ymedio, Caimanera residents traditionally enjoy privileged care with up to 30 percent higher wages and special rations on the state reference book "Libreta."

Most recently, several protests took place last fall as a result of the days-long blackout following the passage of Hurricane "Ian." Residents drew attention to their situation by banging pots and blocking roads, although the authorities mostly acted in a de-escalating manner at the time. Currently, the extremely tense supply situation in connection with the fuel crisis, which has now been going on for around three weeks, is likely to have been the straw that once again broke the camel's back. Residents and relatives of those arrested blamed the food situation for the protests to opposition media. "Cuba is like a powder keg right now, where any further annoyance can lead to an explosion," they said during the island's last major energy crisis in the spring of 2022.

Cuba's 2019 constitution grants the right to demonstrate. A new right of assembly, originally planned for September 2020 to implement the relevant paragraph, was postponed at the time by several years to the legislative period that has now begun. On Tuesday, the increase of discounted rice sales in bodegas was announced. Cuba's Council of State convened [a extraordinary session of parliament](#) the same day for May 25, with news on the economic situation, the draft of a new media law, and the remaining timetable for implementing the new constitution on the agenda. ([Cubaheute](#))