

## Cuba pardons more than 2,000 prisoners



Havana has begun pardoning more than 2,000 prisoners (Source: [Anton Zelenov/Commons/CC-BY-SA 3.0](#))

Cuba announced on Thursday that it would pardon more than 2,000 convicted prisoners. As the news portal *Cubadebate* [reports](#), this is a “humanitarian and sovereign gesture” in the context of Holy Week.

More than 20 inmates left La Lima prison in eastern Havana on Friday, where they were greeted by weeping relatives, as the news agency *AFP* [reported](#). Prisoners were also released from other detention facilities.

Among those pardoned are young people, women, people over 60, foreign nationals, and Cubans living abroad. According to the Cuban Embassy in the U.S., the selection was based on a “careful analysis” of the crimes committed, behavior during incarceration, the portion of the sentence already served, and the health status of those involved. One of the first to be released was 46-year-old Albis Gainza, who had served half of a six-year sentence for robbery, according to *AFP*.

Explicitly excluded from the pardon were individuals convicted of serious crimes—including sexual violence, murder, manslaughter, drug offenses, armed robbery, child abuse, and crimes against state authorities. Repeat offenders and individuals who had reoffended after a previous pardon were also ineligible.

This marks the fifth such act of clemency by the government since 2011, from which a total of more than 11,000 people have benefited. The release is taking place during the Easter holidays, which is a common practice in the Cuban criminal justice system.

As early as March, 51 prisoners had been released following talks with the Vatican. Last year, Cuba released 553 people as part of an agreement brokered by the Vatican and the U.S. It remains unclear to what extent the latest pardon is related to the ongoing talks with the U.S.: Whether it is an unscripted gesture of goodwill following the U.S.'s recent release of a Russian oil tanker, or a coordinated "[tit for tat](#)" negotiating tactic as part of which Washington and Havana are beginning to draw closer. ([Cubaheute](#))