

Cuba releases Salvadoran terrorist after 28 years in prison



The Meliá Cohiba Hotel (back left) in Havana (source: [Cristian Ghe/Flickr/CC-BY-SA 2.0](#))

Last Friday, Cuba released Salvadoran citizen Otto René Rodríguez Llerena. Rodríguez Llerena had been sentenced to 30 years in prison for his involvement in a bomb attack on a hotel in Havana in 1997, according to a [statement by](#) the Cuban Foreign Ministry.

On August 3, 1997, the Salvadoran had placed an explosive device in the lobby of the Meliá Cohiba Hotel in the Cuban capital, which exploded the following morning. No one was injured in the attack, but property damage amounted to several thousand US dollars.

Rodríguez Llerena was originally sentenced to death. However, in 2010, the Supreme People's Court commuted the death sentence to 30 years in prison. According to court records, the assassin received \$1,000 from [Luis Posada Carriles](#), whom the Cuban government describes as the mastermind behind various terrorist attacks against Cuba.

Rodríguez Llerena was arrested at Havana airport in June 1998 when, during a second visit to the island, he attempted to smuggle in 1.5 kilograms of C4 explosives, two detonators, and two timers. At his sentencing, he confessed that Posada Carriles had paid him for the attacks.

The Cuban Foreign Ministry stated that Rodríguez Llerena “had served his sentence and been released in accordance with the laws of the country.” In December 2024, another Salvadoran, Raúl Ernesto Cruz León, had been released after 30 years in prison. His death sentence had also been commuted to a prison sentence in 2010.

The Cuban government blamed the 1997 attacks on groups financed by the Miami-based Fundación Nacional Cubano-Americana (FNCA). Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez criticized on Friday that the US continues to grant protection to individuals whom Cuba classifies as terrorists.

“While Cuba complies with its laws and ensures that all terrorists are brought to justice, the US continues to allow violent and terrorist acts against Cuba to be organized and financed from its territory,” the Foreign Ministry said. Many of these individuals had “lived freely and with impunity in Miami for decades.” Some have even died without being brought to justice, including Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch.

Posada Carriles, who died in the US in 2018 at the age of 90, is accused by Cuba of masterminding the 1976 bombing of a Cubana de Aviación aircraft that killed 73 people.

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