

Report | Cuba: Transition Scenarios

Forum 2000 Afternoon Coffee | May 14, 2026

Speaker:

José Daniel Ferrer García, leader of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) and former Cuban political prisoner

Moderator:

Jakub Klepal, Executive Director of the Forum 2000 Foundation

During his presentation, José Daniel Ferrer García addressed the economic, social, and political situation on the island, as well as the role of the United States following the Donald Trump administration's operations in Venezuela and its statements regarding Cuba. He also discussed the future of Cuba and its relationship with the European Union. To open the session, the Cuban activist expressed his gratitude for the historical support that Czechia and other Central and Eastern European nations have provided to the Cuban democratic cause and its political prisoners, highlighting the unique understanding of societies that have previously lived under communist regimes.

- ~ **Social and Economic Situation:** José Daniel Ferrer described Cuba as undergoing “its worst crisis since 1902,” marked by a profound economic, social, and humanitarian crisis. He pointed out extreme levels of hunger, inadequate pensions for retirees, severe shortages of medicines, and a deteriorated healthcare system, where access to medical treatment frequently depends on informal payments or professional favors. Furthermore, he highlighted the worsening energy crisis, characterized by constant and prolonged blackouts, and stated that the government's announced measures to increase power generation and oil production have yielded no visible results. Comparing the current state of affairs to the crisis of the 1990s (the “Special Period”), he argued that today's collapse of the healthcare system and unequal access to resources generate even greater public outrage—partly because citizens can now easily witness the lavish lifestyles led by the ruling elite and their families.
- ~ **Political Situation and Human Rights:** Ferrer maintained that the regime continues to respond to growing social discontent exclusively through repression. He noted the countless recent protests in Havana and other cities, which have been met with violent arrests and prosecution threats under charges such as “propaganda against the constitutional order.” He added that prison conditions remain extremely precarious, plagued by malnutrition, disease, and structural corruption among guards, asserting that political prisoners face even harsher treatment. He also explained that opposition organizations, including UNPACU, have been forced to resort to underground activism while simultaneously carrying out humanitarian aid initiatives. Additionally, he highlighted the creation of an opposition alliance named the “Liberation Accord” (*Acuerdo de liberación*), signaling a degree of unity and a forward-looking vision within the opposition movement. Once again, he thanked Central and Eastern European countries, particularly those with firsthand experience under communist rule, for their continued backing.
- ~ **The Role of the United States and the Perception of Trump in Cuba:** According to conversations and informal polling conducted by opposition activists, Ferrer stated that support within Cuba for a potential U.S. intervention as a swift means to end the regime has grown significantly. He indicated that this perception shifted noticeably starting in January, even among members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), many of whom—according to Ferrer—would no longer be willing to repress mass protests. He also maintained that Donald Trump enjoys high popularity among some segments of the Cuban population due to expectations of a tougher stance toward Havana. However, he clarified that a military intervention involving bombings could inadvertently garner sympathy for the regime, whereas a limited “Venezuela-style” operation would be viewed favorably by a large portion of the population.
- ~ **Future Outlook and Relations with the EU:** Ferrer assessed that the Cuban regime faces a scenario of increasing fragility, driven primarily by economic collapse and discontent within the security forces and the military apparatus itself. Nevertheless, he insisted that a democratic transition must fundamentally stem from the internal efforts of the Cuban people, bolstered by international solidarity. In this context, he sharply criticized the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) between the European Union and Cuba, labeling it detrimental to both Cuba and the EU, and called for its suspension. He specifically singled out the Spanish government as the primary defender of the agreement, questioning its stance toward a regime that is allied with Russia and closely aligned with the governments of Venezuela and Nicaragua. Conversely, he noted that countries such as Czechia, Poland, Sweden, and Lithuania have shown a much deeper understanding of the Cuban opposition's demands.