

Cuba

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Subject:	Cuba: Background on the Social Christian Party and the Christian Democratic Party
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Query:

Please provide background information on the Social Christian Party whose current President is Aurelio Sanchez Salazar and the Christian Democratic President whose current president is Maria Valdes Rosado.

Response:

According to Douglas Payne, former director of Hemispheric Studies at Freedom House, and currently an independent monitor of human rights in the Western Hemisphere and expert consultant for the INS Resource Information Center, The Social Christian party and the Christian Democratic Party are both members of the Concilio Cubana. The respective presidents of the two groups were targeted in the Cuban government's March 1996 crackdown on human rights activists and the political opposition. Both organizations suffered serious setbacks due to the crackdown and and have only recently begun regrouping.

The Social Christian Party is relatively small and its membership is limited to the Camaguey area, where it is based. The president, Maria Valdez Rosado, was picked up by Cuban authorities and told to return home and stay there.

The Christian Democratic Party (CD) has a much larger structure than the Social Christian Party with branches in a number of provinces which were particularly active in 1995 and 1996. A smaller group within the Party called Cristo del Rey (CR) broke away in 1996 stating that it was no longer part of the CD. At that time the government was severely targeting the CD and, as a consequence of their affiliation, members of the CR were also being targeted. In July 1996, the CD reported that one of its chief activists in the Camaguey area, Luis Gustavo Dominguez was detained and severely treated. The leader of the Pinar del Rio CD Office has also been detained and mistreated numerous times.

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