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Cuban Government Demolishes Church, Arrests Pastor and Others

After years of threats, Cuban authorities finally demolished a Christian church in the city of Santiago de Cuba and arrested the pastor, and now they are trying to pressure him into signing a document stating that the demolition was legal, a U.K.-based human-rights organization reports.

According to [Christian Solidarity Worldwide \(CSW\)](#), “Cuban State Security, accompanied by heavy machinery including bulldozers,” appeared at the Santiago de Cuba Assemblies of God church around 7:30 Friday morning. “Witnesses told CSW that the authorities planned to demolish the Assemblies of God Church as well as the homes of members of the church located on the property. The Assemblies of God is one of the largest religious groups in Cuba and is legally recognized by the government.”

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The communist government and the church, led by the Reverend Fausto Palomo Cabrera, have long been at odds. In 2015, Palomo Cabrera “was informed by local authorities that his church ... would be confiscated and demolished and that he was prohibited from holding any more services,” wrote [CSW](#). Months later, the government began demolishing the church — only to be stopped dead in its tracks when hundreds of Christians [rushed into what remained of the building and refused to budge](#).

Another local pastor who has also experienced run-ins with the government was on hand Friday to broadcast the latest outrage to the world. Pastor Alain Toledano, the leader of a church in the unregistered Apostolic

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Movement, whipped out his cellphone and began [streaming the event over Facebook](#).

“They [the government] fear information more than weapons,” Toledano told viewers. “Share this video. This is not a video of any program. It is a video of the attack by the Cuban state against the church. It is an attack by State Security against the people of God.”

“Pastor Toledano has also been a regular target of the government since beginning of his ministry in 2003,” reported CSW. “Over the past 15 years his church has been demolished twice. In 2019 he was put on the list of ‘*regulados*,’ Cubans who are prohibited from traveling internationally, was summoned by the police dozens of times, and was warned a criminal case had been opened against him.”

As Toledano broadcast the demolition worldwide, he was arrested and “taken to the Motorizada Police Station, where he was held alongside two other members of his church ... incommunicado for nine hours,” noted [CSW](#). He dropped the phone, but it continued to broadcast for a short time, during which bulldozers could be heard running while church members sang.

Although Cuban officials claimed the church was being demolished to make way for railroad tracks, CSW wasn’t buying it, pointing out that no other buildings in the neighborhood were torn down.

Further evidence that the destruction was a deliberate attack on the church came on Tuesday, when Pastor Palomo Cabrera and Assemblies of God Regional Superintendent José Martínez were apprehended by other government officials. “It is believed that the authorities are applying pressure on Pastor Palomo Cabrera and Superintendent Martínez to sign a document saying that the demolition of the church was legal,” penned CSW. The group’s local sources also report that those same officials are actually “attempting to charge Pastor Palomo Cabrera for the use of the machinery used in the demolition.”

CSW CEO Scot Bower said his organization was “deeply concerned” about these events. “We strongly condemn the demolition of the Assemblies of God Church and the eviction of church members,” he added. “This church has been in the crosshairs of the Cuban government since 2015 and its arbitrary destruction is a serious violation of freedom of religion or belief.”

Bower also condemned the arrests and the pressure being put on Palomo Cabrera and Martínez. Rather than the government’s making the church pay for its own destruction, Bower called on the state to reimburse the church for its losses.

In all of this, the good news is that while the communists were still able to do as they pleased, they could no longer do so in secret. As Toledano put it in his video, “Let the world find out what is happening here, the true face of this political system, the true face of the communist system.”