

**8177:6/89**  
**AMERICAN BAPTIST**  
**RESOLUTION ON CUBA**

**Background Statement**

The 1959 revolution in Cuba which brought Fidel Castro to power had its roots in the earlier decades when dictatorship permitted influence and wealth in the hands of a small minority of the population. The majority was left without adequate education, land, social services and employment. The situation has been repeated throughout Latin America and the Caribbean countries. In the case of Cuba, observers felt that only a clean sweep in the government would bring about real change. That happened in 1959.

Much of Cuba's history and lifestyle was tied to the United States of America and its political and economic policies. It is safe to conclude that the revolution affected Cuba's North American neighbor very strongly. Since 1960, the alienation from Cuba has been marked by trade embargo and severance of diplomatic relations. During the seventies, several U.S. Congressmen visited Cuba to discuss the possibility of easing tensions. In July, 1975, the Organization of American States\* removed joint sanctions against Cuba with the USA concurring in that majority vote.

Over the years, Cuba has been the only socialist country with a policy that permitted its citizens to leave their country. It produced an influx of refugees particularly to the U.S.A. Families were separated for long years and continue to be so. Both the embargo and the severance of relations between the two nations, together with travel restrictions set by the U.S. Government, have deeply affected relationships with the churches in Cuba, disrupting the historical linkage American Baptists have had with Eastern Cuban Baptists since 1899.

The Board of International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches USA in a Resolution approved November 1975, has maintained the need for normalizing relations between Cuba and the U.S.A. It is time to reiterate that position. We recognize that there are a variety of problems attendant to the establishment of full diplomatic relations. If the will to resolve long-standing issues exists, the problems can be addressed by all parties concerned.

In an effort to include Cuban Baptists, regional gatherings, conferences and consultations sponsored by the Baptist Council on World Mission have enabled small delegations to travel and meet church leaders from neighboring countries.

In February, 1989, an official American Baptist delegation consisting of fifteen persons traveled to Cuba upon the invitation of the Eastern Cuba Baptist Convention, an event unparalleled in the last thirty years. American Baptist leaders met with Dr. Jose Felipe Carneado, Director of the Office of Religious Affairs in the Cuban Government, and had dialogue with him. They visited churches in the Eastern section of the island, experiencing the improved relations between the religious groups and the Castro

government, and seeing the consequences of the long embargo in the structures and organizations of Cuban Baptists. It is necessary to acknowledge the political differences between the two nations and how this affects social and economic conditions.

On the world scene, other factors appear to favor the process of normalization:

- with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the role of the former USSR as patron and sponsor of the Castro government has ended, and Cuba is no longer a threat to the United States or the Western Hemisphere, therefore, the reasons for supporting this embargo are obsolete.
- the continuation of the embargo on trade between the United States and Cuba that was declared in February 1962 is counterproductive, adding to the hardships of the Cuban people while making the United States the scapegoat for the failures of the communist system;
- in the former Soviet Union, the Eastern bloc countries, China, and Vietnam, the United States is using economic, cultural, academic, and scientific engagement to support its policy of promoting democratic and human rights reforms; and
- the United States can best support democratic change in Cuba by promoting trade and commerce, travel, communications, and cultural, academic, and scientific exchanges.
- The Namibia Accord (December 22, 1988) called for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola in return for a Namibia independent from South Africa.
- peace in Central American has been achieved (El Salvador in January 16, 1992 and Guatemala in December 29, 1996) by a genuine, open and fair process of dialogue and negotiation.
- The visit of the Pope John Paul II in January of 1998, and the public worship celebrations in June 1999, sponsored by the major Protestant churches in Cuba have allowed for a new understanding of religious expression.

However, with the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, the United States government has further tightened the economic embargo by:

- urging the President to sanction countries that trade with Cuba;
- prohibiting trade by United States subsidiaries established in foreign countries;
- prohibiting ships that dock in Cuban ports from docking in any United States port for a 180 day period;
- denying the rights of commercial companies and investors of foreign nations access to Cuban markets;

In 2005, the U.S. administration tightened travel restrictions even more, and as a result, most religious organizations, including International Ministries, have been denied the

Department of Treasury license to travel to Cuba, making our ministry even more difficult.

All of these factors have caused increases in the shortages of food and products used in food processing, fuel, and especially medicines, medical supplies and equipment.

A number of United States allies oppose these bills as clear interference in the affairs of sovereign nations.

The economic embargo now violates, not only the humanitarian and democratic traditions of the United States, but the legal principles of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, and other international laws to which the USA government is a signatory.

American Baptists have upheld the sanctity of all human life created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Humankind is the beneficiary of God's love with the gift of freedom of choice (Genesis 3:3), although we remain accountable to God. The goal of shalom (wholeness) includes love of God and of one another, of peace and justice in the universe.

The AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION ON PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEMAKING OF 1989 ask that “allowance be made in determining U.S. policy for a variety of political, social and economic systems and that the freedom of nations to set their own policies that benefit their own cultural patterns be recognized.”

The RESOLUTION ON SELF-DETERMINATION OF 1984 declares our “belief in the principle of self-determination (self government) for the people of the world and urges our government to stand by this principle in its international relations.”

And the AMERICAN BAPTIST RESOLUTION ON RECONCILIATION OF 1993 calls us to “Create an atmosphere of reconciliation that allows people to let go of views and attitudes that perpetuate barriers; Model God’s love by receiving God’s grace and being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to forgive and love others; seek to move institutional policy and practice toward justice, mercy and humble walking with God;”

## **Resolution**

Therefore, the General Board of the American Baptist Churches USA resolves to:

1. Urge the U.S. Administration to lift the trade embargo on Cuba and remove all travel restrictions;
2. Urge the U.S. Administration to take the necessary steps to reestablish full diplomatic relations with Cuba;

3. Encourage continued cooperation in efforts towards the reunification of families, both in Cuba and in the U.S.A.;
4. Encourage dialogue and exchange of cultural programs between the two countries;
5. Urge American Baptists to study and work towards regional understanding of the community of nations as well as the church community;
6. Call upon the Board of International Ministries to suggest and help facilitate means of strengthening relationships between American Baptist Churches and our Baptist sisters and brothers in Cuba; and to
7. Request the General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches in the USA to convey to the U.S. Administration the need for normalization of relations between the U.S.A. and Cuba.

\*The Organization of American States was established in 1948 with 20 Latin American republics and the U.S.A. Later Caribbean nations were added to the list. It is a regional group pledged to provide collective security and work for peaceful settlement of disputes. The charter forbids intervention in the internal affairs of sister republics without collective agreement. Some serious violations have taken place, such as the Bay of Pigs crisis in 1961.

Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - December 1989 145  
For, 4 Against, 1 Abstention  
Modified by the Executive Committee to the General Board - March 1992  
Modified by the Executive Committee to the General Board - March 1993  
Modified by the Executive Committee to the General Board - March 2002  
Modified by the Executive Committee to the General Board - March 2006  
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## **POLICY BASE**

### **American Baptist Policy Statement on Human Rights – 1976**

As American Baptists we declare the following rights to be basic human rights, and we will support programs and measures to assure these rights:

1. The right to the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing, and health care;
2. The right to develop family structures, to build mutually satisfying human relationships and to nurture, train and educate children;
3. The right to a secure and healthy environment, clean air, pure water and an earth that can nurture and support present and future generations;
4. The right to grow in mind and selffulfillment, to secure an education, to develop knowledge, to exchange ideas, and to receive, impart and have access to information.
5. The right to follow the dictates of conscience, to express dissent individually or in groups to prevailing ideas, governments and institutions;
6. The right to develop skills and abilities, to utilize these in economic, political, social, intellectual and religious institutions, and to receive a just return for one's labor.

### **American Baptist Policy Statement on Military and Foreign Policy – 1989**

Global understanding and cooperation are essential to the pursuit of peace. Our welfare is fundamentally linked to that of all people. National actions and priorities continually need to be reassessed in the light of all peoples must be respected if there is to be a solid foundation for peace. International economic systems must transcend narrow national selfinterests and provide a framework for global justice and peace. Social and economic justice, as well as concern for human welfare and potential, are essential elements in national security. Social, economic and political structures that do not respond constructively to the needs of people contribute to the causes of war and global instability.

### **American Baptist Policy Statement on Peace - 1985**

1. The Christian peacemaker is called to be the facilitator Of reconciliation, the agent of sharing human wealth and resources, and the evangel of repentance and salvation.
2. As Christians we will constantly seek, through the resources of faith, prayer and scriptures, to struggle with the issues of peacemaking in the contemporary context.
3. We share our common humanity with all of humankind, and all must work together if peace is to be secured. Even if our disputes with others are severe and deep, we will strive to value our opponents as human beings and will seek all peaceful means to resolve disputes and to break down the walls of hostility between us.
4. As members of the Christian family we have relationships with Christians in many countries. We listen to what is said to us by those Christians and gain insights from them

that will enable us to better understand their countries and will give us a new perspective on our own country.

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