



**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE DIRECTORATE OF THE PATRIOTIC UNION OF CUBA, UNPACU, ON THE SITUATION OF JOSÉ DANIEL FERRER GARCÍA.**

**November 7, 2019**

This morning, the wife and three young children of José Daniel Ferrer García, leader of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) were able to confirm that the opposition leader is slowly being murdered. They saw him in an office in the presence of an officer in the Aguadores prison in Santiago de Cuba for 5 minutes, in which he was able to narrate very quickly everything that has happened to him. The visit ended when José Daniel tore the prison uniform that had been forcibly put on him, at which point the family was able to see the physical signs of torture all over his body.

The family says that José Daniel Ferrer has lost more than half of his body weight, that he is hunched over and that he could barely hug them because he has almost no muscular strength. He has also largely lost his vision and voice. They summarized by saying that he looks like a very sick old man. With respect to the marks on his body, they affirm that there is a laceration on part of his face, and bruises on his thoracic and abdominal areas, upper and lower extremities and back. In the latter, they also noticed traces of friction burns and marks of blows with canes.

José Daniel said he went on a hunger strike -also abstaining from water for portion of it- for 25 days, which began on October 6<sup>th</sup>, while he was in the Provincial Unit of Criminal Instruction of Santiago de Cuba. The reason for this strike was that he was being supplied with fetid water to drink and spoiled food that caused acute acidity.

Ferrer said that it was in this state that he was transferred to Aguadores prison on October 9th and taken to a punishment cell. In that prison, they gave him a brutal beating and dressed him in uniform by force; he then broke the uniform in protest and they have kept him half-naked. Today was the eighth time that they put the prison clothes on him against his will.

He explained that in the punishment cell where they keep him, they placed a common prisoner named Israel Frómeta, who has an extensive criminal record and history of aggression. He beats him every time he raises his voice and protests or demands medical attention; that same prisoner has stated that he has orders from the prison authorities represented by Major Montoya to kill him. He also says that this criminal has a knife in the cell, with the approval of the aforementioned officer and constantly threatens to use it against him.

He went on to say that from the day he was arrested, he has only received medical attention last Sunday and an antacid pill yesterday afternoon. Despite his delicate state of health, the torture is systematic: he is beaten periodically, kept half naked in a wet and cold cell, his hands and feet are chained, he is dragged which causes friction burns, he is daily offended and verbally abused and constantly reminded that he will not leave there alive. He also added that they threatened to double the torture if he told his family these things during the visit.

Finally, Ferrer said that after the hunger strike they passed him for a detachment for 4 days, where he could secretly send the letter that was recently published, but was currently in a punishment cell. Moments before he was handcuffed and violently taken away, with the small physical strength he had left he, in protest, tore the uniform he was wearing and told his family firmly that he was already restarting his hunger strike. He textually expressed: "Freedom, dignity or death."

The management of our organization appreciates all the gestures of solidarity that have been made by governments, institutions and people in the world in pursuit of the freedom of José Daniel Ferrer and the other 3 detained activists. We are sure that this visit was seized from the Cuban communist regime thanks to that solidarity and the pressure it generates. But now more than ever we need support, because judging by the prolonged torture, punishment, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment to which he is being subjected, it is only a matter of time before he dies.

**Directorate of the Patriotic Union of Cuba**