

www.**Breaking News English**.com

Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

The Breaking News English.com Resource Book

“1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers”

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/book.html>

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

URL: http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0512/051215-sakharov_prize.html

Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Speaking	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

15 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has barred members of a women's opposition movement from traveling to Europe to receive the prestigious Sakharov human rights prize for freedom of thought. The so-called "Ladies in White" are joint winners of the prize but have been grounded by Fidel Castro for being an outlawed group. Repeated petitions by the European Union, which oversees the annual award, have fallen on deaf ears in Cuba's Foreign Department. Instead, the EU is weighing up the option of sending its own delegates to Cuba to present the accolade. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 against the long-term detention of their husbands and sons, who are political dissidents. Havana has so far remained tight-lipped about the prize and travel ban.

Condemnation from Europe over the refusal to issue visas to the women has been fierce. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering, head of the European Popular Party, said: "I call on the Cuban authorities to let them depart. If they do not, we will be obliged to again harshly criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the planet." Spanish conservative Jose Ignacio Salafranca stated that the women "have committed no offense other than to bravely defend the rights of their family members". A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, lambasted her government, saying: "It does with our lives whatever it wishes....It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any opinion other than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been striving for our rights."

WARM-UPS

1. CUBA SEARCH: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about Cuba. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting or surprising. Would you like to travel to or live in Cuba?

2. PROTEST: What do you think is the best form of protest against a government? What kind of protests would your government listen to? In pairs / groups, talk about how effective the following forms of protest might be in your country. How would your government react? Which would you take part in?

- Silent street protests
- Nationwide industrial action
- Written petitions
- Armed resistance
- Mass hunger strikes
- Street riots
- Campaigns on the Internet
- Sit-ins in government buildings

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Cuba / opposition movements / prizes / human rights / Fidel Castro / being deaf / detention / travel bans / visas / Communism / dictatorships / bravery / opinions

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. FREEDOMS: Do you live in a free country? Do you think there should be greater freedom in your country? Write down five things you are free to do in your country that you cherish. Talk about these with your partner(s). Talk also about what life would be like without these things.

5. OPPOSITION OPINIONS: Discuss these opinions with your partner(s).

- a. I would never be concerned enough to protest against my government.
- b. People in the world need to stand up against their government more often.
- c. All governments will break laws to stop people protesting.
- d. Non-violent protests are the most effective.
- e. People who live in dictatorships should unite and fight their government.
- f. The bravest people in the world are those who actively oppose dictators.
- g. All of the world's people will enjoy basic human rights one day.
- h. The world does far too little to defend human rights.

6. FREEDOM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with freedom. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

7. COMPARISONS: Make comparisons between these countries. They are often in the news regarding human rights issues:

Cuba China North Korea Zimbabwe Chile USA Russia Sudan

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Fidel Castro has given a lot of land to Cuban human rights activists. | T / F |
| b. Cuba has refused travel visas for a group called the "Men in White". | T / F |
| c. The EU is weighing up the option of sending delegates to Cuba. | T / F |
| d. Havana has so far refused to comment about travel bans. | T / F |
| e. EU politicians have strongly commended Fidel Castro's decisions. | T / F |
| f. A German politician called Cuba a fascist dictatorship. | T / F |
| g. A Cuban activist rebuked Havana over the lack of freedom in Cuba. | T / F |
| h. The activist said people are simply striving for their rights. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| a. barred | pushing |
| b. prestigious | restricted |
| c. grounded | protestors |
| d. weighing up | regimes |
| e. dissidents | severely |
| f. condemnation | illustrious |
| g. harshly | criticized |
| h. dictatorships | prohibited |
| i. lambasted | denunciation |
| j. striving | considering |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| a. barred members of a women's opposition | prize for freedom of thought |
| b. the prestigious Sakharov human rights | option of sending its own delegates |
| c. fallen | dictatorships on the planet |
| d. the EU is weighing up the | the refusal to issue visas |
| e. Havana has so far remained | for our rights |
| f. Condemnation from Europe over | movement from traveling |
| g. one of the last Communist | government, saying... |
| h. committed no offense other | tight-lipped about the prize |
| i. Miriam Leiva lambasted her | on deaf ears |
| j. we have just been striving | than to bravely defend the rights... |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has _____ members of a women's opposition movement from traveling to Europe to receive the prestigious Sakharov human rights prize for freedom of _____. The so-_____ "Ladies in White" are joint winners of the prize but have been grounded by Fidel Castro for being an _____ group. Repeated _____ by the European Union, which oversees the annual award, have fallen on deaf ears in Cuba's Foreign Department. Instead, the EU is weighing up the option of sending its own delegates to Cuba to present the _____. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 against the long-term _____ of their husbands and sons, who are political dissidents. Havana has so far _____ tight-lipped about the prize and travel ban.

called
remained
outlawed
barred
accolade
thought
detention
petitions

Condemnation from Europe over the _____ to issue visas to the women has been _____. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering, head of the European Popular Party, said: "I _____ on the Cuban authorities to let them depart. If they do not, we will be _____ to again harshly criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the planet." Spanish conservative Jose Ignacio Salafranca stated that the women "have committed no _____ other than to bravely defend the rights of their family members". A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, _____ her government, saying: "It does with our lives whatever it wishes....It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any _____ other than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been _____ for our rights."

lambasted
striving
fierce
offense
call
refusal
opinion
obliged

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has _____ members of a women's opposition movement from traveling to Europe to receive the _____ Sakharov human rights prize for freedom of thought. The so-called "Ladies in White" are joint winners of the prize but have been grounded by Fidel Castro for being an _____ group. Repeated petitions by the European Union, which oversees the annual award, have fallen _____ ears in Cuba's Foreign Department. Instead, the EU is weighing up the option of sending its own delegates to Cuba to present the _____. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 against the long-term detention of their husbands and sons, who are political _____. Havana has so far _____ tight-lipped about the prize and travel ban.

Condemnation from Europe over the refusal to issue visas to the women has been _____. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering, head of the European Popular Party, said: "I call on the Cuban authorities to let them depart. If they do not, we will be obliged to again _____ criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the planet." Spanish conservative Jose Ignacio Salafranca stated that the women "have committed no _____ other than to _____ defend the rights of their family members". A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, _____ her government, saying: "It does with our lives whatever it wishes....It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any opinion _____ its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been _____ for our rights."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'ladies' and 'white'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "HUMAN RIGHTS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about our freedoms, human rights and the countries that disallow them.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| • members | • fierce |
| • thought | • depart |
| • Fidel Castro | • planet |
| • ears | • defend |
| • detention | • wishes |
| • tight | • striving |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Cuba?
- c. Why do you think governments deprive people of human rights?
- d. Do you think every single government in the world is guilty of human rights abuses?
- e. Which countries do you think are the biggest abusers of human rights?
- f. Do you think the Ladies in White should receive a higher accolade?
- g. What is the most dangerous thing you would do to defend your rights or those of your family?
- h. What do you think of campaign groups like Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch?
- i. Where are the biggest abuses of human rights taking place in the world today?
- j. What will happen in Cuba after Fidel Castro dies?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Why do you think the Cuban government is not allowing the Ladies in White to travel to Europe?
- d. How would you feel if your government prevented you from leaving your country?
- e. Is it right for a government to prevent its citizens from leaving the country under special circumstances?
- f. Do you think the EU can get Cuba's government to overturn its decision and allow the women to travel?
- g. What do you think of governments that throw people in prison for criticizing its actions?
- h. What human rights abuses is your government accused of?
- i. Have you ever stood up for your rights?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

LUCKY? In pairs / groups, talk about the human rights listed below (one of them is not an official right!). Discuss what life would be like without these rights. Put the main points in the middle column. Discuss what your life is like having been afforded these rights. Summarize your thoughts in the right hand column.

RIGHT	LIFE WITHOUT	LIFE WITH
The freedom to travel and hold a passport.		
Not being subjected to torture.		
The freedom to study English.		
Being equal before the law without any discrimination.		
The right to rest and leisure.		
The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.		

- Change partners and explain what you discussed.
- Talk about how (un)lucky you are to (not) enjoy basic human rights.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Ladies in White. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. STUDENT RIGHTS: Create a charter of student rights (students of English or other languages and subjects). Think of eight basic rights all students must have. Provide an explanation supporting each point. Show your charters to your classmates in the next lesson. Whose charter best champions students?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Fidel Castro asking him why his government refuses to allow the Ladies in White to travel. Give him advice on the benefits to Cuba of granting the women travel visas. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| a. barred | prohibited |
| b. prestigious | illustrious |
| c. grounded | restricted |
| d. weighing up | considering |
| e. dissidents | protestors |
| f. condemnation | denunciation |
| g. harshly | severely |
| h. dictatorships | regimes |
| i. lambasted | criticized |
| j. striving | pushing |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| a. barred members of a women's opposition | movement from traveling |
| b. the prestigious Sakharov human rights | prize for freedom of thought |
| c. fallen | on deaf ears |
| d. the EU is weighing up the | option of sending its own delegates |
| e. Havana has so far remained | tight-lipped about the prize |
| f. Condemnation from Europe over | the refusal to issue visas |
| g. one of the last Communist | dictatorships on the planet |
| h. committed no offense other | than to bravely defend the rights... |
| i. Miriam Leiva lambasted her | government, saying... |
| j. we have just been striving | for our rights |

GAP FILL:

Cuba grounds human rights prizewinners

Cuba's government has **barred** members of a women's opposition movement from traveling to Europe to receive the prestigious Sakharov human rights prize for freedom of **thought**. The so-called "Ladies in White" are joint winners of the prize but have been grounded by Fidel Castro for being an **outlawed** group. Repeated **petitions** by the European Union, which oversees the annual award, have fallen on deaf ears in Cuba's Foreign Department. Instead, the EU is weighing up the option of sending its own delegates to Cuba to present the **accolade**. The prizewinners have been protesting since 2003 against the long-term **detention** of their husbands and sons, who are political dissidents. Havana has so far **remained** tight-lipped about the prize and travel ban.

Condemnation from Europe over the **refusal** to issue visas to the women has been **fierce**. Germany's Hans-Gert Poettering, head of the European Popular Party, said: "I **call** on the Cuban authorities to let them depart. If they do not, we will be **obliged** to again harshly criticize [one of] the last Communist dictatorships on the planet." Spanish conservative Jose Ignacio Salafranca stated that the women "have committed no **offense** other than to bravely defend the rights of their family members". A spokeswoman from the group, Miriam Leiva, **lambasted** her government, saying: "It does with our lives whatever it wishes....It controls whether we can travel abroad. It won't allow any **opinion** other than its own. We are very peaceful people and we have just been **striving** for our rights."