

2 October 2019

Cuba: Michel Matos banned from travelling to the Dublin Platform

On 26 September, Cuban cultural rights defender Michel Matos was banned from travelling from José Martí International Airport in La Havana while en route to attend the [Dublin Platform](#) in Dublin, Ireland, organised by Front Line Defenders.

On 26 September at approximately 8:00 pm Michel Matos was prevented from travelling from José Martí International Airport in Havana. While being processed at passport control, officials informed him he was not permitted to board the plane as he is included on an automatic travel ban list. He was not shown any documents or given any further details on the ban, other than being told that the officials “were following orders”. The defender was not notified of a travel ban prior to his flight.

Michel Matos, is an activist for cultural rights in Cuba. He, along with other artists, musicians and performers, has taken a stand against the controversial Decree 349, signed by Cuba’s President Miguel Díaz-Canel in April 2018, which grants the Ministry of Culture disproportionate power to control, cancel and sanction artistic expression, while containing vague and overly broad restrictions. Michel Matos has previously been arbitrarily detained as well as faced intimidation and threats for his activism.

Front Line Defenders is concerned by the increased use of travel bans targeting human rights defenders in Cuba. Other organisations, including [Corriente Martiana](#) have also faced such travel bans in recent months. These restrictions are issued without previous notice, legal documents or explanations. Human rights defenders believe these limitations to their freedoms come from the State security and the intelligence apparatus in response to their work and are designed to stop human rights defenders from talking about human rights violations in Cuba outside the island.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cuba to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally remove the travel ban imposed against Michel Matos and all other human rights defenders facing travel restrictions in Cuba, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being punished solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Cuba are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.