

“There is only one thing stronger than all the armies in the world: and that is an idea whose time has come” wrote Victor Hugo, and such is the case for Cuba’s San Isidro Movement. As Dictator Raul Castro played the fictional role for the world to see of leading Cuba towards supposed change, behind the scenes he was crafting a Draconian decree aimed at what the regime considers to be their biggest adversaries: free thinking Cubans. Ironically, it was [Decree 349](#) itself authored by Dictator Raul Castro and signed into law by so-called President Diaz Canel in 2018 that had the unintended consequence of creating the San Isidro Movement.



[Movimiento San Isidro “MSI”](#)

The very nature of art is accosted in Decree 349 by empowering a regime official, the “Minister of Culture” to determine who has “the right” to be an artist in Cuba. As with any opportunity in Cuba, it is reserved for those that the regime deems worthy in other words, those in good standing with the regime itself – others need not apply. Anyone not regime approved caught in the process of performing art as well as the establishment of where the perceived criminal act is taking place is subject to penalties and punishment. This includes an artist’s place of residence which is subject to search by enforcers of the Ministry of Culture for artistic materials which will be confiscated by the State.

In response to the then proposed, (now law) [Decree 349](#), artists, intellectuals, journalists, and activists formed the San Isidro Movement (MSI) to peacefully protest against the further criminalization of the arts in Cuba. Through their efforts, MSI has captured the attention of the worldwide media and support from major human rights organizations like [Amnesty International](#). What began as a campaign in protest of 349, became a campaign in support of artists such as rapper [Denis Solis](#), who filmed his home being arbitrarily searched this past November. Solis was subsequently arrested, tried without a lawyer, and is currently serving an eight-month prison sentence in Valle Grande, a maximum-security prison in Havana for alleged disrespect against a public official. On November 9<sup>th</sup> several members of MSI participated in a collective poetry reading outside the police station where Solis was arrested. In this zero-tolerance society, the poetry reading resulted in arbitrary arrests and detentions.

In late November, [Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara](#) performance artist, former prisoner of conscience and one of the leaders of MSI declared a [hunger strike](#) asking for Solis to be released. This idea surfaced after the regime sequestered his home with members inside forbidding the coming and going of people and living essentials. After a weeklong hunger strike, Cuban police broke down the door and forcibly removed fourteen members of MSI.

The following day, November 27th hundreds of young Cubans gathered outside the office of the Minister of Culture. It became clear that this movement was gaining immense traction and that Cuba's youth was losing their fear. With the crowds getting larger the Regime took back control by calling for and promising a dialogue. The tactic worked, the crowds dispersed, and the regime took back the promise of a dialogue days later mocking the idea as an ["imperialist reality show"](#) on state news and on social media. The regime clearly underestimated the Cuban youth who in turn created Movimiento N27 as a sign that they were committed to their cause and would not be intimidated or ignored.



November 27, 2021 Photo N27 Facebook

On January 27, 2021 young Cubans from N27, all wearing masks and practicing social distance, stood across the street from the offices of the Cuban Minister of Culture. They were peacefully reciting poems while a noticeable state police presence was intensifying. Vice Minister of Culture Fernando Rojas came out telling the youth to leave their phones outside and walk to the building where they could meet. Given the heavy police presence, not having their phones and the lack of trust in what the regime offers, the youth decided to stay on the other side of the street. Live feed captured the moment that the Cuban Minister of Culture Alpidio Alonso [physically attacks Mauricio Mendoza](#), a journalist for Diario de Cuba. Mendoza's phone was ripped from his hands and later vanished. The past confronting the future, in that instance one could see the old henchman of the regime attack a youth demanding freedom and real change. Alonso, accompanied by his Vice-Ministers and other regime officials cornered the youth as a bus arrived along with plain clothed State Security thugs hurling insults, grabbing telephones, and pushing the young Cubans who had just been reading poetry. [A phone was able to capture the audio](#) inside the bus

which the youth were forcibly loaded into. There are screams, menacing tones and we come to find out that at least two women were stripped and sexually assaulted with forced cavity searches.

Even the staunchest of regime sympathizers are finding these actions indefensible. The movement continues to grow and garner support.



January 27, 2020 – [Movimiento 27 N](#) Photo Facebook

As of the present time, leaders of Movimiento San Isidro (MSI) remain under constant surveillance and harassment with some under strict house arrest. Denis Solis remains imprisoned and the hostility against artists by the regime continues. Please like Movimiento San Isidro and N27 Facebook pages and share their news. Reach out to your favorite artists and ask them to join in solidarity with them.