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‘Struggle against sexual and gender violence goes hand in hand with struggle for decolonization’

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Remarks by Berta Joubert-Ceci of Mujeres En Lucha/Women In Struggle at the webinar “What We Can Learn from Cuba’s ‘Code of Freedom’ for Families” on Jan. 22.

Buenas tardes compañeras y compañeros,

First, I wanted to thank Mariela Castro for taking the time to record this message. Because as we know, part of the effect of the U.S. blockade against Cuba is that the application Zoom cannot be used there.

As a member of Mujeres En Lucha/Women In Struggle, which is a member

organization of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF or FDIM in Spanish), I also wanted to acknowledge the fact that Mariela's mother, Vilma Espín, was instrumental in saving the FDIM after the dismemberment of the European socialist countries.

At that time, Vilma was vice president while the FDIM headquarters was in Berlin. And it was her swift action of saving documents and materials from that office, securing them, that preserved the FDIM from extinction.

Compañeres, this topic is also very pertinent to our process in Puerto Rico. As a colony of the U.S., we suffer in greater degree some of the ills that affect the U.S. Violence against women and LGBTQ+ people have been on the rise, including against children. This has been fueled by a rising wave of fundamentalist religious sectors that affect the government's actions and policies and seem to be a copy and paste of what happens in the U.S.

So, for us here, the struggle against sexual and gender violence has to go hand in hand with the struggle for decolonization, for independence.

But as the poem of Lola Rodríguez de Tió says, "Cuba y PR son, de un pájaro las dos alas," "Cuba and Puerto Rico are wings of the same bird." We can look up to Cuba's development and Families Code as an inspiration.

We hope to fulfill here in PR what is expressed in the introduction of the new Cuban Families Code: "The emancipatory conception of the family that guides the transformation of Cuban socialist society intertwines social interest and personal interest, promotes its development, contributes to the formation of the new generations and satisfies deep human, affective and social interests of the person."

