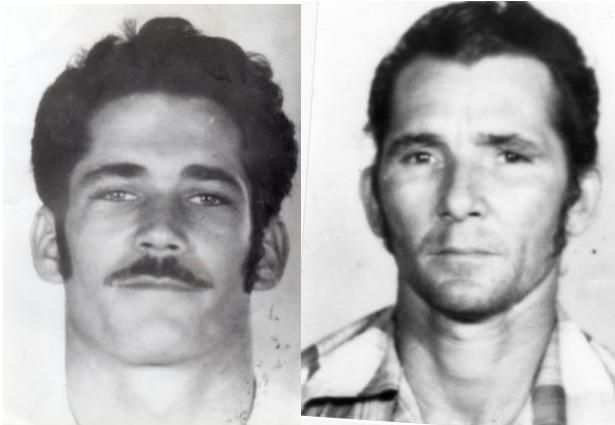


The Toledo family: 2 executed, 2 assassinated in prison, many more imprisoned for years



Armando Hernández González, age 29, and Ramón Toledo Lugo, age 39, were executed on October 1, 1982 at La Cabaña Fortress Prison, Havana.

Hernández and Toledo were brothers in law (Toledo's sister, Odalys, was married to Hernández). Both were pumping equipment operators at the Cotorro Municipality of Havana's Water Treatment Plant. They were arrested on August 23, 1980, tried, and sentenced to death.

Earlier that year, 1980, during and in the aftermath of the Mariel mass exodus by sea, several members of the Toledo family openly advocated for Cubans to not go into exile and instead work to bring about regime change from within. They began to meet and print flyers calling for people to unite. It was later discovered, during the trial, that the group had been infiltrated by a government spy.

Hernández and Toledo were taken to Villa Marista, State Security headquarters in Havana. Not knowing where they were, their wives immediately knew something was wrong and went into hiding with their children at the house in the countryside of another family member. Within a week, they had been discovered. One night, government officials arrested all of the adults and left the four small children (ages 3, 5, 6 and 7) in the care of an aunt who was just in her early teens. They survived "liked animals" until another set of grandparents found them three months later.

The "conspirators" were tried and falsely accused of an elaborate plot and of planning violent acts and having arms. With the parents and grandparents in prison, the children were allowed to visit them very infrequently. The Hernández children only saw their father around twice a year during the two years he spent in prison before his execution. They also endured severe psychological abuse, humiliated and taunted by prison guards during visits with their father. Often, they would spend the day waiting, from 7AM to 4PM, going without food, only to be told the visit had been suspended.

From prison, Hernández wrote a letter telling his loved ones that he would not allow the difficult times he was facing to belittle him and had his feet firmly on the ground, adding: "When I am gone, I want my flag as my roof, the earth as my mother and, for the air to breath, freedom!"

On October 1982, two uniformed government officials showed up at the house to notify the family that the executions had been carried out and hand them death certificates. This took place in front of the children. Their grandmother fainted, as their grandfather pounded his head with his fists, crying out loud that they had executed his son “for nothing.” The guards, meanwhile, were delighted to see the family’s traumatic reaction.

Hernández had left two children, ages 3 and 5. His wife, Odalys Toledo, served 8 years of prison. Toledo had left two children, ages 5 and 7. His wife, Margarita Varela, was served 8 years of prison.

With their father executed and their mother in jail, the children were social outcasts. At school, they were constantly threatened and weren’t allowed to go near the Cuban flag, while the teachers ignored them and made them sit in the back of the classroom. Once, a car tried to run over Armando Jr. while riding his bike in back roads.

After the mother served eight years and was released, a guard would come to their house to interrogate her every week. There was always a policeman watching the family. They finally went into exile.

Cousins **Edilio González Toledo** and **Antonio Toledo Rizo**, were detained in the same raid of August of 1980 in which many family members were imprisoned. Prison authorities alleged they hung themselves in separate instances with their shoelaces (which prisoners were not allowed to have).

Sources: *Copy of Judicial Docket. Armando Hernández Toledo and Oraykys Hernández Toledo, testimony at University of Miami's information session on Cuba Archive, February 28, 2006. Filmed interviews with two other family members who served prison, in person, in Miami during 2005, 2006, and 2007. Testimony of former political prisoner now living in Florida who served prison with members of the family, February 2005, Miami. Copy of letter from prison written by Armando Hernández, dated November 10, 1981.*

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