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News Flash

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Cuba: Releases of prisoners of conscience should continue

Amnesty International (AI) welcomes the release of two further prisoners of conscience by the Cuban authorities, but calls for more to be released. Manuel Vázquez Portal and Juan Roberto de Miranda Hernández were granted medical parole, both having received treatment for serious medical conditions while in custody.

AI has received numerous reports of illnesses among prisoners having been aggravated by prison conditions, insufficient access to appropriate medical care and, at times, hunger strikes.

The recent releases brings the total number of prisoners of conscience released in the past two months to ten; four of them -- Leonardo Bruzon Avila, Emilio Leyva Perez, Carlos Alberto Dominguez Gonzalez and Lázaro Miguel Rodriguez Capote -- had been held for over two years without trial.

AI recognises a further 78 prisoners of conscience in Cuba and calls on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release them all.

"In addition, we call on the authorities to comply with the principles laid out in international human rights standards for the treatment of prisoners," the organization said.

Background:

In the space of a few days beginning on 18 March 2003, the Cuban authorities arrested scores of dissidents in targeted sweeps. Some were subsequently released, but 75 of them, including Manuel Vázquez Portal and Juan Roberto de Miranda Hernández, were subjected to hasty and manifestly unfair trials in early April and quickly sentenced to long prison terms of up to 28 years. Most appealed their sentences, but the appeals were rejected.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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