

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Prisoners of Conscience

11 August 1994

CUBA: Jorge Omar LORENZO PIMIENTA, Interim President of the
Consejo Nacional por los Derechos Civiles
(CNDC),

National Council for Civil Rights

Dr Alberto RODRÍGUEZ GARCIA, CNDC member

Dr Jesús FAISEL IGLESIAS, lawyer and CNDC member

Dr René GÓMEZ MANZANO, lawyer and CNDC member

René DEL POZO, spokesman for the Coordinadora de

Organizaciones de Derechos Humanos de

Cuba (CODEHU), Coordinating Group of Cuban Human Rights

Organizations

Gerardo VALDÉS, CODEHU member

Fernando VELAZQUEZ MEDINA, recently released prisoner of
conscience

Xiomara GONZÁLEZ, wife of Fernando Velázquez Medina

Soldilina DEL POZO, medical surgeon

Heriberto CRESPO FRESCO

Sara FRANCO LEMON, member of the unofficial Confederación
de Trabajadores Democráticos, Confederation of
Democratic Workers

Elizardo SANPEDRO MARTÍN

Fernando SÁNCHEZ LÓPEZ

Dra María VALDÉS ROSADO, President of the unofficial
Movimiento Cubano Demócrata Cristiano (MCDC),

Cuban Christian Democrat Movement

David BUZZI (Junior)

Héctor PALACIOS

Aída Rosa JIMENÉZ, President of the Partido Cívico
Democrático, Civic Democratic Party

Nélida VERA

Gustavo CANO

Amnesty International has received the names of 19 people who were arrested by members of the security forces in Havana on 6 August 1994 in an apparent round-up of known government critics and human rights activists. The authorities have acknowledged that some 300 people are in detention in connection with a series of events that had taken place over the preceding day or so. However, unofficial sources believe that some 500 may have been arrested. Some of those under arrest, including the above, are believed to be prisoners of conscience who had not been involved in the violent events but were targeted in reprisal for their known anti-government views. It is not clear where they are being held though some detainees were reportedly shown on Cuban television apparently being held in some kind of prison complex.

Members of the National Council for Civil Rights in Cuba are believed to have been particularly singled out because of their work in trying to document the large numbers of people who have drowned trying to leave Cuba illegally by sea. The President of the group, Francisco Chaviano, was arrested on 7 May and is currently under investigation at State Security headquarters reportedly

accused of revealing state security secrets (see UA 186/94 (AMR 25/05/94, 11 May 1994) and follow-up AMR 25/08/94, 2 August 1994). Amnesty International believes him to be a prisoner of conscience. Most of the others named above are known to be active members of unofficial political and human rights groups.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over 5,000 people trying to flee Cuba illegally have been picked up by US Coast Guards during 1994. In the wake of a spate of attempted armed hijackings of local ferries by people wishing to leave the country illegally in which two policemen are believed to have died, violent clashes took place on 5 August in central Havana between anti-government protesters and police and pro-government groups. Several thousand people had reportedly gathered along the Havana seafront, many apparently hoping that other boats would be hijacked and that they would be able to board them and reach the USA. When this did not occur and refusing to obey police orders to disperse, the crowd reportedly attacked the security forces with sticks and stones while shouting anti-government slogans and proceeded to break shop windows and loot some shops in the centre of Havana. The police reportedly fired repeatedly into the air to force them to disperse. Many people were arrested, including, according to some reports, innocent bystanders.

Similar incidents were also reported in other parts of the city where special armed troops were said to have been called in. In response to the unrest, the authorities mobilised large numbers of supporters, including the Rapid Response Brigades (**Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida**), groups of volunteers set up in 1991 to confront any signs of "counter-revolutionary" activity. Many of these were said to be armed with sticks and metal tubing. They reportedly attacked the demonstrators, as well as anyone who did not appear to support the government. President Castro said that if "counter-revolutionaries" caused further disturbances in the capital, the people themselves would deal with them without firing shots ("**sin tiros**"). However, if the police were attacked with weapons, they would have to defend themselves. The Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces also called on "Havana patriots" to be on the alert to confront any "counter-revolutionary" activity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters:

- urging that those named above be released immediately and unconditionally on the grounds that they are prisoners of conscience who have been targeted simply for their legitimate activities in defence of human and civil rights;
- requesting that they be granted immediate access to lawyers;
- requesting that their relatives be immediately informed of where they are being held and be permitted to visit them;
- urging that all members of non-violent political and human rights groups be permitted to carry out their legitimate activities without interference from the authorities.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz
 Presidente de los Consejos de Estado
 y de Ministros
 La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Presidente Castro, Havana, Cuba

Telex: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Fax: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261 [These telex and fax numbers are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - please ask them to forward your message to the President]

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

2) Attorney General:

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3
La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telex: 511456 fisge

Fax: + 53 7 333164

Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

3) Minister of Justice:

Dr Carlos Amat Forés
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Calle 0 # 216, 8° piso
e/ 23 y Humboldt, Vedado
La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Havana, Cuba

Telex: 511331

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Department of State Security (Villa Marista)

Coronel Adalberto Rabeiro García
Jefe del Centro de Investigaciones
Departamento de Seguridad del Estado
Villa Marista
La Víbora
La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: CoronelGarcía, La Víbora, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: + 53 7 408036

Tel: + 53 7 403535

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Sr Roberto Robaina González
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calzada No. 360
Vedado
La Habana, Cuba

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261

National Union of Jurists:

Dra Zenaida Osorio Vizcaina
Presidente
Unión Nacional de Juristas de Cuba

Calle 21, No. 552, esq. D
Apartado 4161
La Habana 4, Cuba

and to diplomatic representatives of Cuba accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 September 1994.