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CUBA

Prisoner of Conscience, Víctor Reinaldo Infante Estrada, receives additional sentence

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Amnesty International believes that **Víctor Reinaldo Infante Estrada**, a former teacher, is a prisoner of conscience, detained for the non-violent exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release. The organization has recently had further cause for concern since, in addition to his 13 year sentence, **Víctor Infante** has recently been sentenced to an additional one year's imprisonment, charged with "*desacato*", "disrespect". He is currently being held in Agüica Prison, Matanzas province. He is reportedly in a punishment cell which has no mattress and he is not being permitted family visits.

Víctor Infante, *who was thirty six years old on 8 February 1997*, was detained on 19 April 1992 in Havana. At the time of his arrest, he was said to be the coordinator of the unofficial **Unión Cívica Nacional (UCN)**, National Civic Union. He was brought to trial on 1 August 1992, together with **Carmen Julia Arias Iglesias** and **Dr Omar del Pozo Marrero**, on a charge of "*revelación de secretos concernientes a la Seguridad del Estado*", "revelation of state security secrets", (*article 95 of the Cuban Penal Code*). He was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment, and the other two defendants were sentenced to 9 and 15 years' imprisonment, respectively.

A State Security official, Sub-Lieutenant **Julio César Alvarez López**, was also a defendant in the case and for that reason the trial was held in a military court. No members of the press or public, except one relative of each defendant, were permitted to attend. **Víctor Infante** was assigned a state lawyer (*abogado de oficio*) whom he reportedly saw briefly on two occasions before the trial. The three defendants were accused of exchanging "counter-revolutionary views" with **Sub-Lieutenant Alvarez**, whom they told about their ideas and who allegedly gave them the names of other state security agents who had infiltrated opposition groups. All four were accused of putting the security of the nation and the lives of state security officials at risk. **Sub-Lieutenant Alvarez** was sentenced to 19 years' imprisonment for "revelation of state security secrets" and "insubordination".

Amnesty International believes that the real motive for their imprisonment was their anti-government views and their attempts to set up two political opposition groups, neither of which are known to have used or advocated violence. **Víctor Infante**, **Carmen Arias** and **Dr Omar del Pozo** were merely recipients of information which was of legitimate interest to them in that it directly affected the security of the members of their organizations. Amnesty International also believes that their trial fell far short of international standards for a fair trial.

On 21 January 1997 **Víctor Infante** was tried in case no. 20/97 at the *Tribunal Municipal*, Municipal Court, in Matanzas. He was sentenced to an additional one years' imprisonment, charged with "disrespect". This was reportedly because in December 1996, while held in Combinado del Sur Prison, he protested when a prison official beat another prisoner and threatened to have him hung. The following day the prisoner committed suicide. Amnesty International considers this new sentence simply as a further way to punish **Víctor Infante** for his views relating to human rights.

Following a visit to Cuba by US Congressman, Bill Richardson, **Carmen Arias** was released in February 1996, only on condition that she go into exile abroad. **Dr. Omar del Pozo** remains imprisoned. In February 1996 he was transferred to Combinado del Este Prison, where according to latest reports, he is suffering from *high blood pressure, abscesses, a stomach ulcer, and heart and kidney problems*. He is also suffering from malnutrition, leading to the loss of almost all his hair and teeth and his weight has dropped dangerously low. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely as a result of his political and human rights activities, and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Background Information

Amnesty International believes that there are at least six hundred prisoners of conscience in Cuba, possibly considerably more, some serving sentences of up to ten or fifteen years, who have been targeted for arrest solely because of their peaceful attempts to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association, assembly, movement and religion. The organization is concerned about the continuing harassment and/or imprisonment of those who peacefully express views that differ from those of the government on a whole range of issues. Such groups include human rights defenders, independent journalists, political groups and groups of lawyers, journalists, trade unionists, women and others. Despite in many cases having requested official recognition, such groups have never been permitted to operate officially although they are not formally banned. As a result of their unofficial status, members have encountered problems for several years, including being harassed, detained, interrogated and threatened that they may face imprisonment if they do not stop their activities or leave the country.

Please send faxes/express and airmail letters preferably in Spanish. If not, in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Víctor Reinaldo Infante Estrada is being imprisoned solely for the non-violent exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Víctor Infante, on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for his attempts to peacefully exercise his right to freedom of association and expression.
- Urging that all Cuban citizens be guaranteed their rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that the Cuban Government immediately cease to imprison, force into exile abroad or otherwise punish those who attempt to peacefully exercise such rights.

Please send appeals to:

Head of State and Government

