

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 347/93 Prisoner of Conscience/Enforced Exile/
Health Concern

1 October 1993

CUBA: Sebastián ARCOS BERGNES, Vice-President of the Comité
Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos,
Cuban Committee for Human Rights

Amnesty International has received reports that prisoner of conscience Sebastián Arcos Bergnes is being subjected to pressure from the Cuban authorities to accept exile in return for his early release. His state of health is said to be poor and he is reportedly not receiving medical attention.

Sebastián Arcos Bergnes is the Vice-President of the unofficial *Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos* (CCPDH), Cuban Committee for Human Rights. He was arrested on 15 January 1992 and sentenced in October 1992 to four years eight months imprisonment for "enemy propaganda" on the grounds that he had "sent abroad false reports of human rights violations by the Cuban authorities which were used in campaigns of defamation against Cuba promoted by the United States".

Arcos, who is in his early 60s, is currently held in Ariza Prison, Cienfuegos and is permitted to receive visits only every two or three months. He received a family visit on 20 September and was found to be extremely thin. Previous reports indicated that he had lost 20-30 lbs in weight while in detention. He suffers from an oedema in both legs and has blood pressure problems. He has also been suffering from a gum abscess and has a chronic sinus condition for which he has been refused medical treatment.

Over the past two or three months Arcos is said to have been put under pressure to accept exile abroad in exchange for his liberty, an offer which he has reportedly rejected. According to reports, this pressure has consisted of threats to cancel family visits, to prolong his sentence and to take reprisals against members of his family. The visit he was due to have in July was suspended apparently on the grounds that he had been responsible for smuggling reports of human rights violations out of the prison.

Amnesty International considers Sebastián Arcos Bergnes to be a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely because of his peaceful activities in defence of human rights and believes that he should be released immediately and without condition. Amnesty International opposes enforced exile in all cases.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International believes that there are as many as five or six hundred prisoners of conscience imprisoned in Cuba at present for their peaceful political and human rights activities. A number of them have been released

early in recent months but most only on condition that they leave Cuba. Prison conditions have seriously deteriorated over the past two years, at least in part because of the economic crisis facing the country which has led to shortages of food, medicines and other essentials in the population as a whole. Many prisoners are said to be suffering from malnutrition and illnesses related to their poor diet and conditions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in Spanish, English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that pressure is being put on Sebastián Arcos Bergnes by the authorities to accept early release on condition that he leave Cuba;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release on the grounds that he is prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely because of his peaceful defence of human rights in Cuba;
- urging that he be granted immediate access to all necessary medical treatment.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz
Presidente del Consejo de Estado
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: President Castro, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Faxes: + 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 President Castro)

2) Attorney-General:

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

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511456 FISGE

Faxes: + 5 37 333164

3) Minister of Justice:

Dr Carlos Amat Forés
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Calle O, No. 216, 8vo piso
e/ 23 y Humboldt, Vedado
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511331 MINJU

4) Minister of Foreign Affairs:

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

Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950
Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Director of Ariza Prison
Sr Director
Prisión de Ariza,
Cienfuegos
Provincia de Cienfuegos, Cuba

Newspaper
Granma
Apartado 6260
Ciudad de la Habana, 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 12 November 1993.