

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please send up to 10 appeals per section

UA 59/92

Health Concern

18 February 1992

CUBA:

Silvio AGUILA YANES, aged 30

Amnesty International is concerned about political prisoner Silvio Aguila Yanes who is said to have serious health problems after having been on a hunger strike for 22 days in January 1992.

Latest reports indicate that he is being held in a damp cell without a window or light in the maximum security area of Guanajay Prison, Havana Province, and that the prison authorities have refused to transfer him to a hospital, against the recommendations of medical personnel. He has reportedly threatened to restart his hunger strike and also stop ingesting liquids if he is not transferred to somewhere with light.

Silvio Aguila is believed to be held in the maximum security area because he has been undertaking a protest by refusing to wear his prison uniform - this form of protest has been taken by political prisoners in Cuba for many years and those who do so are known as "*presos plantados*". The protest began on 1 January 1991 in Combinado del Este Prison in Havana. He and several other prisoners refused to wear their prison uniforms and later went on hunger strike.

Silvio Aguila was transferred to Boniato Prison in Santiago on 16 January 1991.

He was reportedly held in a cell in the maximum security area of the prison known as Boniatico and for 17 days was kept handcuffed to his bed, except at mealtimes. In April 1991 he was transferred back to Combinado del Este Prison.

It is not clear how long he has been held in Guanajay Prison.

Silvio Aguila Yanes was arrested in July 1980. He and others were captured after they tried to hijack a boat in order to flee Cuba. Several people were reportedly killed in the course of the attempted hijacking and subsequent confrontation with the security forces. Silvio Aguila Yanes was convicted of piracy (*piratería*) and sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

Amnesty International believes that the conditions under which Silvio Aguila Yanes is reportedly being held and the apparent refusal of the authorities to transfer him to hospital for medical treatment constitute cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received many reports over the years that, in response to their refusal to cooperate with the prison regime and in some cases to wear the prison uniform, "*presos plantados*" have been deprived for long periods of many of their rights and subjected to severe prison conditions and ill-treatment.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Silvio Aguila Yanes is being held in a damp cell without a window or light in Guanajay Prison and that he has serious health problems following a prolonged hunger strike;

- requesting that he be immediately granted all necessary medical treatment and, if considered necessary by independent medical personnel, transferred to hospital;

- requesting that the conditions in which he is held in future conform to the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

APPEALS TO

1) Minister of the Interior:

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Plaza de la Revolución
Ciudad de la Havana, Cuba

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba

Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency

2) Attorney General:

Dr Ramón de la Cruz Ochoa
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3
Ciudad de la Havana, Cuba

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511456 FISGE

Salutation: Señor Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

3) Director of Guanajay Prison:

Señor Director
Prisión de Guanajay
Guanajay
Provincia de la Havana, Cuba

Telegrams: Director Prision de Guanajay, Havana, Cuba

Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Newspaper:

Granma

Apartado 6260

Ciudad de la Havana, Cuba

and to diplomatic representatives of Cuba in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 March 1992.