

URGENT ACTION

CUBAN PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RELEASED

Darsi Ferrer was released from detention in the Cuban capital, Havana, on 22 June. He had spent almost a year in a maximum security prison after organizing protests critical of the government.

Darsi Ferrer, the director of the Juan Bruno Zayas Health and Human Rights Centre, was convicted on 22 June on spurious charges of receiving illegally obtained goods and "violence or intimidation against a state official". He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and three months' "correctional work" outside the prison. As he had already been imprisoned for almost a year he was immediately released.

Amnesty International believes that Darsi Ferrer's sentence still constitutes punishment for criticizing the government and is a powerful message to any Cuban participating in dissenting activities and wishing to express opinions contrary to those of the government.

Darsi Ferrer and his wife Yusnaimy Jorge Soca were detained by state security officials and police officers on 9 July 2009, shortly before a march against repression in Cuba, organized by Darsi Ferrer, was due to take place. Darsi Ferrer was handcuffed and beaten by more than eight police officers. The couple were released without charge a few hours later, but when they arrived home, they noticed that two bags of cement, some iron girders and two window frames that had been on their property for a few months were no longer there. According to neighbours, police officers had taken the construction materials. On 21 July, four police officers went to Darsi Ferrer's home and asked him to accompany them to a police station for questioning about the construction materials. Instead, he was driven to a maximum security prison on the outskirts of Havana and charged. Ordinarily, an individual accused of these crimes would be bailed awaiting trial. However, Darsi Ferrer was refused bail four times. Amnesty International declared him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his activism to promote freedom of expression

Darsi Ferrer has previously been detained and prevented from leading and participating in major human rights events. Since 2006 he has been detained or summoned to a police station around 10 December every year, apparently to prevent him from participating in activities celebrating International Human Rights Day, which falls on that day.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network at present.

This is the first update of UA 134/10 (AMR 25/008/2010). Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR25/008/2010/en>

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