

UA 38/91

Torture/Medical Concern

5 February 1991

CUBA : Orlando AZCUE RODRIGUEZ
Orlando DOMINGUEZ DE LA COBA
Israel LOPEZ TOLEDO

Political prisoners Orlando Azcué Rodríguez, Orlando Domínguez de la Coba and Israel López Toledo have reportedly been on hunger-strike in Camaguey Provincial Prison, known as "Kilo 7", since mid-January. They are said to have been held for more than 17 days with their arms outstretched and chained to the iron bars of their cells.

Orlando Azcué Rodríguez and Israel López Toledo are said to have been beaten by guards on at least three occasions. Orlando Domínguez de la Coba, who has only one arm, is said not to have been beaten. They are also said to be deprived of drinking water. It is not clear whether their situation is being monitored by medical staff.

Amnesty International considers that being held chained to the bars of their cells, beaten and deprived of water while on hunger-strike constitutes torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The three were among 12 prisoners then held in Combinado del Este Prison, Havana, who refused to wear their prison uniform as of 1 January 1991 in an attempt to put pressure on the Cuban Government to bring about peaceful political change and to respect human rights. They had already refused to participate in the prisoner rehabilitation program, together with about 44 other political prisoners who at that time were all being held together in Building 2 of the prison. This type of protest by Cuban political prisoners began in the 1960s and prisoners who adopted such a stance in those days came to be known as "plantados históricos" (literally "historical plantados"). Those who have assumed this position in more recent years are known as "nuevos plantados", "new plantados". The day after the 12 refused to wear the uniform, all of the "new plantados" were reportedly subjected to a thorough search conducted by the prison authorities, accompanied by members of the State Security Police, in the course of which many personal belongings were allegedly removed, including food utensils, books, letters from relatives, medicines and blankets. They are said to have been left to eat their food with their hands or out of plastic bags and to have also been prevented from undertaking the one hour's exercise they are normally allowed.

On 14 January, the twelve who had refused to wear the prison uniform and who include at least three prisoners of conscience adopted by Amnesty International, were reportedly transferred to other prisons: six to Kilo 7, and the other six to either Boniato Prison in Santiago de Cuba or Combinado del Sur Prison in Matanzas.

Orlando Azcué Rodríguez was arrested on 5 April 1990 and tried on 12 October 1990 on a charge of "enemy propaganda", believed to be on the grounds that he distributed anti-government leaflets. He was found guilty and is believed to have been sentenced to three years' imprisonment. It is thought likely that he is a prisoner of conscience although full details of his case are not yet known. Orlando Domínguez de la Coba was sentenced to death in 1983 after being found guilty of kidnapping two foreign tourists and wounding one of them; the sentence was later commuted to 30 year's imprisonment on appeal. Israel López Toledo was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment in 1981 for "rebellion" after being accused of being involved in a plot to assassinate President Fidel Castro. Amnesty International has not adopted the latter two prisoners as prisoners of conscience.

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, both the "plantados históricos" and the new "plantados" have been deprived for long periods of many of their rights and subjected to severe prison conditions and ill-treatment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/telephone calls/airmail letters:

- expressing serious concern at reports that Orlando Azcué Rodríguez, Orlando Domínguez de la Coba and Israel López Toledo have been held chained to the bars of their cells for at least 17 days, that they are being deprived of water while on hunger strike and that two of them, Orlando Azcué Rodríguez and Israel López Toledo, have been beaten on at least three occasions;
- stating that Amnesty International considers such treatment to constitute torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- urging that they be held in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and be granted adequate medical supervision.

APPEALS TO:

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

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 511560 MINREX HAB

Telegrams: Ministro Interior Colomé, Havana, Cuba

Telephone: 30 15 66

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

Telexes: 511456 FISGE

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Mayor Lázaro Donis Roca
 Director
 Cárcel Provincial de Camaguey
 Kilómetro 7
 Carretera de Nuevitas
 Camaguey, Cuba

Telegrams: Mayor Roca, Cárcel "Kilo 7", Camaguey, Cuba

Telephone: 61803

COPIES TO:

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Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

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FL 33135, USA

(Coordinating Body of Human Rights Organizations in 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 19 March 1991.