

EXTERNAL

AI Index: 25/01/96

UA 08/96

Arbitrary detention/harassment

16 January 1996

CUBARaul RIVERO CASTAÑEDA, aged 50

Juan Antonio SANCHEZ (both members of *Cuba Press* and the *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium)

Amnesty International is concerned that Raúl Rivero Castañeda and Juan Antonio Sánchez, both members of the independent press agency, *Cuba Press*, who were arrested on 14 January 1996, could face imprisonment as prisoners of conscience. These arrests are the latest in a recent spate of arrests and harassment of journalists and members of a newly-formed coalition called the *Concilio Cubano*, of which *Cuba Press* is a member.

According to reports, Raúl Rivero was arrested at his home in Havana, the capital, by several policemen, including one of high-rank. Juan Antonio Sánchez happened to be in the house at the time. The two men were taken to a police station and later transferred to *Villa Marista*, the headquarters of the Department of State Security. As far as Amnesty International is aware no charges have been brought against them yet.

Since its formation in October 1995 members of the *Concilio Cubano*, which is made up of over 100 human rights groups, independent professional associations and political parties, have been subjected to harassment, threats and arrests. Meetings have also been disrupted in what appears to be a concerted effort by the authorities to prevent the organization from carrying out its activities. Many of those arrested have been interrogated for several hours and threatened with imprisonment if they carry on with their activities, before being released. Over the last few days there has been an upsurge in temporary arrests, both in Havana and Santa Clara, as well as the disruption of meetings. Independent journalists have also been harassed, including on a previous occasion Raúl Rivero. On 18 July 1995 he was accosted in a Havana street by a stranger, who stole his briefcase, which reportedly contained articles that *Cuba Press* were hoping to get published abroad. (See UA 175/95, 14 July 1995 and follow-ups AMR 25/09/95, 24 July 1995, and AMR 25/13/95, 25 October 1995, for more information).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

All media in Cuba are state-controlled and freedom of expression, association and assembly are severely limited. Over the past few years a number of non-governmental organizations, involving political and human rights activists, independent journalists and trade unionists, economists, lawyers and others, have been formed. However, none has been granted official permission to operate even when they have made the appropriate application to the Ministry of Justice for recognition - their requests usually go unanswered. Recently an application made in the name of *Naturpaz*, an ecological and pacifist organization, which is part of *Concilio Cubano*, was turned down by the Ministry of Justice, ten years after the application was submitted.

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

- expressing concern at reports of the arrests of Raúl Rivero Castañeda and Juan Antonio Sánchez, both members of *Cuba Press*;
- urging that they be immediately and unconditionally released unless charged with a recognizable criminal offence;

- urging that members of *Cuba Press* and other freelance journalists and members of the *Concilio Cubano* be permitted to carry out their legitimate activities without interference from the authorities.

APPEALS TO:

1) Attorney-General
Dr Juan Escalona Reguera
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3, La Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba
Telex: 511456 fisge
Fax: + 53 7 333164
Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs
Sr Roberto Robaina González
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calzada No. 360
Vedado, La Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Havana, Cuba
Telex: 511122 / 511464 / 512950
Fax: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of the Interior
General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra
Ministro de Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Plaza de la Revolución
La Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Department of State Security
Sr Director
Departamento de Seguridad del Estado
Villa Marista
La Víbora
La Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Director, Villa Marista, Havana, Cuba
Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Cuban Journalists' Union (official body)
Unión de Periodistas de Cuba
Calle 23 No. 452
Apdo 6646
Vedado
Havana, Cuba

Editor of Granma (daily newspaper)
Sr Jacinto Granda de Laserna
Granma

Apdo 6260
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 27 February 1996.