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EXTERNAL

All Index: AMR 25/01/97
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Date: 29 January 1997

IMPRISONED DOCTOR

**Dr Omar DEL POZO Marrero
CUBA**

Dr Omar del Pozo, a 47-year-old Cuban physician, is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence in Combinado del Este Prison, Cuba, for "revealing state secrets". Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely as a result of his political and human rights activities. The organization appealed for his release in 1995 (see AMR 25/10/95, 31 August 1995), and is again calling for his immediate and unconditional release. Amnesty International has received further information about the state of health of Dr Omar del Pozo. According to latest reports, he is suffering from malnutrition, leading to the loss of almost all his hair, several teeth, as well as body mass. He continues to suffer from high blood pressure, apical abscesses, a stomach ulcer, as well as heart and kidney problems.

While in prison Dr del Pozo has reportedly suffered harsh treatment, adding to a deterioration in his physical condition. Until June 1995, he spent most of his time in Quivicán, a maximum security prison in Havana, where there are reports of poor food, excessive heat and insanitary conditions. Dr del Pozo has gone on hunger strikes and has been placed in punishment cells at various times, on one occasion for four months, where he was not allowed any family visits, reading materials or exercise. He was moved to a military hospital on 1 June 1995 where he reportedly did not receive any medication for his medical problems for more than a week.

After five weeks, at the beginning of July 1995, he was transferred to Guanajay Prison. According to Dr del Pozo's family, while in Guanajay his physical condition did not improve and lesions appeared on his face. In February 1996 he was transferred to Combinado del Este Prison, where he remains.

Amnesty International is urging the immediate and unconditional release of Dr del Pozo and is seeking assurances that he have access to adequate nutrition and any necessary medical care.

Background

Dr Omar del Pozo Marrero, president of the *Unión Cívica Nacional* (UCN: National Civic Union), a non-violent opposition group, was arrested on 19 April 1992 at his home in

Havana. Two other people, Carmen Arias Iglesias and Victor Reinaldo Infante, were arrested at around the same time. All were initially held at the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista but no information was available concerning the charges to be brought against them until a few days before their trial took place on 1 August 1992. They were tried together with a member of the State Security police, Sub-Lieutenant Julio César Alvarez, in a military court. All were accused under article 95 of the Penal Code, which deals with the revelation of state security secrets.

Dr del Pozo and Victor Reinaldo Infante were convicted under article 95 of the Penal Code and sentenced to 15 and 13 years' imprisonment respectively. Carmen Arias was convicted of being an accomplice to the actions of the two civilians and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. Following a visit to Cuba by US Congressman, Bill Richardson, she was released in February 1996, on condition that she go into exile abroad.

[In December 1996 Victor Reinaldo Infante was transferred from Combinado del Sur Prison to Alquílica Prison. On 21 January 1997 he was tried in case no. 20/97 and sentenced to an additional one year's imprisonment, charged with "*desacato*" ("disrespect"). This was reportedly because in December 1996, while held in Combinado del Sur Prison, he protested when a prison official beat another prisoner. Amnesty International considers this new sentence simply as a further way to punish him for his views relating to human rights and continues to call for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.]

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Americas Regional Program
Date: 29 January 1997

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Dr Omar del Pozo Marrero
CUBA

Keywords

Theme: POC

Profession/association: doctor

Summary

Dr Omar del Pozo, aged 47, was sentenced in 1992 to 15 years' imprisonment for "revealing state security secrets" and is currently being held in Combinado del Este Prison. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely as a result of his political and human rights activities, and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release. Amnesty International has received further information about the state of health of Dr Omar del Pozo. According to latest reports, he is suffering from malnutrition, leading to the loss of almost all his hair, several teeth as well as body mass. He continues to suffer from high blood pressure, apical abscesses, a stomach ulcer, and heart and kidney problems.

Recommended Actions

Letters from medical professionals, preferably written in Spanish or your own language, should be sent to the addressees below:

- urging that Dr. Omar del Pozo be immediately and unconditionally released on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience;
- expressing concern at his state of health; asking for details of his current situation and for details of any medical care he is receiving;
- urging that while in prison he have access to adequate nutrition and medical care.

Addressees

Attorney General

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Minister of Justice

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Copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Roberto Robaina González
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and to the Cuban diplomatic representative in your country, or if there is not one, then to the nearest one.