

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 21/93 Legal Concern/Health Concern/Hunger strike 29 January 1993

CUBA: Amador BLANCO HERNANDEZ, aged 41, former university professor
 and President of the unofficial Comisión Nacional de Derechos
 Humanos "José Martí", "José Martí" National Human Rights
 Commission

Amnesty International is concerned about the legal situation and the state of health of Amador Blanco Hernández, the President of the unofficial **Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos "José Martí"**, "José Martí" National Human Rights Commission, who began a hunger strike on 16 December 1992. From the information so far available Amnesty International believes Amador Blanco Hernández to be a prisoner of conscience. He was arrested in his home in Caibarien, in the province of Villa Clara, on 10 December 1992 and taken to the headquarters of the Departamento de Seguridad del Estado (DSE), Department of State Security, in the city of Santa Clara where he is believed to be under investigation on a charge of *propaganda enemiga*, enemy propaganda (article 103 of the Cuban Penal Code). During a search of his home carried out by DSE officials at the time of his arrest, several documents, reportedly including reports of human rights violations and copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, were taken away. Although he is being allowed weekly family visits, he has not yet had access to a lawyer. He is believed to be held in a cell on his own. Since 16 December 1992, he is said to have been on hunger strike in protest at his arrest and the charge that the authorities appear to be intending to bring against him. He suffers from asthma and high blood pressure and has had at least one asthma attack since being on hunger strike. When his mother visited him on 10 January 1993, she reportedly found him to be very weak and showing signs of dehydration. The following week, he was said to be scarcely able to walk. It is not clear what medical attention, if any, he is receiving.

Amador Blanco Hernández is a former professor of history at the Universidad Central de Las Villas, Central University of Las Villas, but was reportedly sacked in 1982, it is believed because of criticisms he had made of government policy. In 1987 he set up the "José Martí" National Human Rights Commission.

In May 1990 he was arrested and sentenced to three years' imprisonment on what was allegedly a trumped-up charge of illegally entering the home of a neighbour. He is believed to have been released in early or mid-1992.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 10 December 1992, the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Cuban authorities launched what appears to have been a coordinated crackdown on the activities of peaceful political opponents and human rights activists, particularly in the capital, Havana. The homes of several leading activists were surrounded for up to ten days by crowds of pro-government

supporters, in many cases believed to be members of the Destacamentos Populares de Respuesta Rápida, People's Rapid Response Detachments (or Rapid Response Brigades), who prevented the occupants from coming and going and other people from visiting them. In some cases, services such as electricity, gas and telephones, were cut off. Other dissidents were attacked in the streets and several, including Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, Rodolfo González and Paula Valiente were arrested. All except Rodolfo González, who is said to be under investigation on a charge

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of enemy propaganda, are believed to have been released. (See UA 392/92, AMR 25/30/92, 14 December 1992 and follow-up AMR 25/01/93, 7 January 1993, and UA 402/92, AMR 25/31/92, 18 December 1992 and follow-up AMR 25/02/93, 15 January 1993, for further information.)

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

- urging the immediate and unconditional release of Amador Blanco Hernández on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely on account of his non-violent activities in support of human rights;
- expressing concern that he is reported to have begun a hunger strike on 16 December 1992 in protest against his arrest;
- noting that he suffers from asthma and hypertension and seeking information on his present state of health;
- seeking assurances that he has access to proper medical attention and is receiving all the medical care he requires;
- urging that he be granted immediate access to a lawyer of his choice.

APPEALS TO

1) Attorney-General

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

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511456 FISGE

Salutation: Señor Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

2) Minister of Justice

Dr Carlos Amat Forés
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Calle O, No. 216, 8vo piso
e/ 23 y Humboldt, Vedado
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511331 MINJU

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

3) President of the Supreme Court

Dr José Raúl Amaro Salup
Presidente del Tribunal Supremo Popular
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Presidente Tribunal Supremo Popular, Havana, Cuba
Telexes: 511457 TSUPO

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

4) Head of the Department of State Security, Santa Clara
Señor Jefe de Investigaciones
Departamento de Seguridad del Estado
Carretera de Camajuaní, Km 2
Santa Clara
Provincia de Villa Clara

Telegrams: Jefe Seguridad del Estado, Santa Clara, Cuba

Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Sir

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 12 March 1993.