

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 57/94 Fear for safety

17 February 1994

CUBA: Eugenio RODRIGUEZ CHAPLE - president of the
unofficial Frente Cívico Democrático (FCD),
Front

Democratic Civic

Lázara HERRERA PORTELLES - his wife
and their two children

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Eugenio Rodríguez Chaple, the president of the unofficial *Frente Cívico Democrático* (FCD), Democratic Civic Front, Lázara Herrera Portelletes (his wife) and their two children.

On 12 February, a crowd of some 30 people, including children, reportedly forced their way into their Havana home, shouting pro-government slogans and hurling insults directed towards them and their two children. Two of the crowd were said to have held Eugenio Rodríguez while others hit Lázara Herrera Portelletes, with a metal pipe, causing injuries to her shoulders, back and head. Their daughter reportedly also received a blow to the ribs although it is not clear how this happened. The assault was led by a neighbour who is said to have led attacks against the family on several occasions before and to have threatened to kill Eugenio Rodríguez. The crowd smashed up everything in the house, including the electric cooker, and threw away the little food the family had. The attack lasted about 25 minutes and ended when other neighbours protested about what was happening. The police did not appear on the scene. When Eugenio Rodríguez later went to make a complaint about the incident at a police station, he was given a hostile reception and told by one official that those things did not happen in Cuba. He left without being able to make an official complaint.

The family has been the object of harassment on several occasions in the past few months: On 23 November 1993, Lázara Herrera was detained for three days by police and reportedly beaten. On one occasion, Eugenio Rodríguez was knocked off his bicycle by a car while the occupants shouted insults at him. On 2 December 1993, he was detained and searched by the occupants of two Lada cars who then beat him up and left him almost unconscious. On two occasions, a man and a woman have reportedly tried to kidnap the couple's two children from school. The couple are now said to be frightened to let their children go out on their own.

The nature of the attack on 12 February and the fact that the police have so far failed to take action against those responsible suggests that there is official involvement in the campaign against the Rodríguez Chaple family.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past three years, members of unofficial political and human rights groups have regularly been subjected to incidents of this type in an apparent attempt to force them to give up their legitimate peaceful activities. In 1991, representatives of several Communist Party organizations agreed at a meeting with President Fidel Castro to set up *Destacamentos Populares de Respuesta Rápida*, People's Rapid Response Detachments, popularly known as *Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida*, Rapid Response Brigades, "to defend the country, the Revolution and socialism in all circumstances, by confronting and liquidating any sign of counter-revolution or crimes" wherever it might appear and by whatever means necessary. Numerous reports of incidents of intimidation and harassment allegedly involving such brigades have been made since then, frequently including physical assault. In January 1994 Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, the president of the unofficial *Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional*, Cuban Commission of Human Rights and National Reconciliation, reported several incidents of harassment of moderate dissidents over a two-week period, including the beating up of the group's spokesman, René del Pozo, in what was described as a "carefully planned attack" as he was cycling through Havana.

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

- urging an immediate investigation into the attack on Eugenio Rodríguez Chaple, Lázara Herrera Portelletes and their two children on 12 February and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- requesting that the authorities take immediate steps to protect Eugenio Rodríguez Chaple, Lázara Herrera Portelletes and their two children from further incidents of this nature;

- requesting that members of unofficial political and human rights groups be permitted to carry out their legitimate activities in peace.

APPEALS TO:

1) President:

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz
President of the Council of State and Ministers
La Habana, Cuba

Telegramms: President Castro, Havana, Cuba

Telegrams: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261 [These telx and fax numbers are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - please ask them to forward your message to the President]

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

2) Attorney General:

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3, La Habana, Cuba

Telegramms: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telegrams: 511456 figg

Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

3) Minister of the Interior:

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

Telegramms: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba

Telegrams: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261 [These telx and fax numbers are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - please ask them to forward your message to General Colomé]

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Minister of Justice:

Dr Carlos Amat Forés
Ministro de Justicia, Ministerio de Justicia
Calle O # 216, 8º piso, c/ 25 y Humboldt, Vedado
La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: 511331

Telegramms: Ministro Justicia, Havana, Cuba

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Sr Roberto Robaina González
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calzada No. 360, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261

Newspaper:

Granma, Apartado 6260
Ciudad de 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 31 March 1994.