

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 10/98

Prisoner of Conscience / Legal concern

29 January 1998

CUBA

Juan Carlos Recio Martínez, aged 29, journalist

Cecilio Monteagudo Sánchez, aged 26

Juan Carlos Recio Martínez and Cecilio Monteagudo Sánchez will reportedly stand trial on 3 February 1998, in the Villa Clara People's Provincial Tribunal, on charges of "enemy propaganda" and "other acts against state security". This is reportedly on the grounds that they produced a leaflet calling on people not to vote in the local elections that took place in October 1997. Amnesty International considers Cecilio Monteagudo Sánchez, in detention since 15 September 1997, to be a prisoner of conscience and fears that Juan Carlos Recio Martínez is in danger of becoming one. It believes they were arrested solely for attempting to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. There is also concern that they will not be granted full judicial guarantees in accordance with international standards.

Cecilio Monteagudo Sánchez, a member of the unofficial *Partido Solidaridad Democrática*, Democratic Solidarity Party, in Camajuaní, Villa Clara province, is believed to be held in the Villa Clara Provincial Prison (known as "La Pendiente"), Santa Clara, Villa Clara province. Juan Carlos Recio Martínez, a journalist working for the independent press agency *Cuba Press*, was questioned on 3 November 1997 but released to await trial. The prosecution are believed to be seeking a sentence of six years' imprisonment for Cecilio Monteagudo and 18 month's "correctional work with internment" for Juan Carlos Recio.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Cuba freedom of expression, association and assembly are severely limited in law and in practice. Those who attempt to express views or organize meetings or form organizations that conflict with government policy and/or the aims of the socialist state are likely to be subjected to punitive measures including loss of employment, harassment, intimidation and often imprisonment. It is difficult to give precise numbers of prisoners of conscience because of the severe restrictions on human rights monitoring and the lack of official information. However, Amnesty International believes that there are several hundred people currently imprisoned in Cuba because of their peaceful attempts to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

The most common charges of an overtly political nature brought against such people are "*propaganda enemiga*", "enemy propaganda", and "*desacato*", "disrespect". In many cases those concerned are charged with criminal offences, sometimes trumped up, in order to disguise the political motivation for their arrest.

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

- noting reports that Juan Carlos Recio Martínez and Cecilio Monteagudo Sánchez are to be tried on 3 February 1998 on charges of "enemy propaganda" and "other acts against state security";
- expressing concern that the charges have been brought against them solely because of their peaceful political activities;
- requesting that the charges be immediately dropped and that Cecilio Monteagudo be immediately and unconditionally released;
- urging that, if brought to trial, they both be provided with full judicial guarantees in accordance with international fair trial standards, including adequate access to a lawyer of their choice.

APPEALS TO:

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section.

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
Telexes: 511456 fisge
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
Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950
Faxes: + 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

COPIES TO:

National Union of Jurists
Unión Nacional de Juristas
Apartado 4161
La Habana 4, 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 1998.