



RELEASE DARSI FERRER

TAKE ACTION NOW!



'[...] the reason I am confined behind these bars and walls, surviving in precarious conditions, is that I am being punished for not allowing my dreams of freedom to be snatched away, for wishing that in our nation justice, equality and opportunities are a reality that permit every Cuban to live with dignity, for not allowing them to take away hope. And above all, for everyone to be equal before the law, something which does not happen at the moment [...] I will physically remain a prisoner but I am a free man in spirit and in conscience' Open letter from Darsi Ferrer to the Ministry of the Interior, 10 August 2009.

Over the last four years Darsi Ferrer, Director of the 'Juan Bruno Zayas' Health and Human Rights Centre in Havana, has frequently been detained and prevented from leading and participating in major human rights events. During the most recent detention he was also beaten. Amnesty International considers Darsi a prisoner of conscience and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Since July 2009, Darsi has been detained in pre-trial detention on spurious charges of receiving illegally obtained goods. He is currently being held in a maximum security prison intended for inmates who have been convicted of violent crimes. Amnesty International believes that Darsi Ferrer has been detained solely on account of his activism to promote freedom of expression in Cuba.

Darsi Ferrer had organized a demonstration on 9 July 2009 at 7:30pm on the Malecón, Havana's sea front. The march, called "*El paseo de tus sueños*" ("The stroll of your dreams") invited participants to campaign for a better Cuba without repression. A few hours before the march was due to take place, six officers from the National Revolutionary Police and a police officer from the Ministry of Interior arrived at Darsi Ferrer's house stating they had a search warrant. When Darsi and his wife Yusnaimy asked to see the warrant, the police refused to show it claiming it still needed a prosecutor's signature. When Darsi and his wife refused the officers entry to their home, they were arbitrarily arrested and taken to Aguilera Police Station, in Lawton, central Havana, where they were interrogated for several hours. Darsi was handcuffed and beaten by more than eight police officers, one of whom pretended to strangle him. Around midnight Darsi and Yusnaimy were released without charge.

When Darsi and his wife arrived home that day, they noticed that two bags of cement and some iron girders they had in their yard were no longer there and two window frames had also been removed from the walls. According to neighbours, at around 7:30 pm police officers had returned to search the home and took the construction materials and the windows.

On 21 July, four police officers requested Darsi accompany them to a police station to answer questions about the confiscated materials. However, he was driven to Valle Grande maximum security prison, on the outskirts of Havana. There he was charged with *receptación* – receiving illegally obtained goods (an offence which carries a sentence of three months to one year) and

atentado – using “violence or intimidation” against a state official or official witness (which carries a sentence of one to five years). The charge of *atentado* was apparently brought following a statement by a neighbour who claims Darsi shouted that “*an injustice was being committed*” and that “*sooner or later, things are going to change in Cuba and this could not happen any more*”.

Darsi Ferrer claims he was given the building materials by a colleague who had left the country and had not finished refurbishing his own house. The bags and girders had been on the porch of the house in full view from the street months before the authorities came to confiscate them.

Amnesty International believes that the accusation of receiving illegally obtained goods is a pretext with which to charge Darsi in order to prevent him from carrying out his activities to promote freedom of expression in Cuba. Ordinarily, an individual accused of these crimes would be bailed awaiting trial.

Darsi Ferrer is being held at Valle Grande prison, a maximum security prison in Havana. During the first few weeks of his imprisonment he was held in a section with inmates suffering tuberculosis. Following a protest hunger strike he was transferred to another section of the prison.

Another irregularity in the case of Darsi is that although the charges against him are for minor offences usually handled by local judicial officials, his case has been referred to the Central Prosecutor’s Office in Havana. There, it is being considered by the Attorney General who takes instructions from the Council of State, whose president is chief of Government and head of State, Raúl Castro.

Darsi Ferrer was previously arrested at his home on 1 September 2006, at around 2:30 am and was later released at 8am. At 1pm the same day he was re-arrested whilst walking on the street. Every 10 December since 2006 he has been detained or summoned to a police station to prevent him from participating in activities celebrating Human Rights Day. He has also worked as an independent journalist and been critical of the Cuban health system.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Please write letters in Spanish or your own language,

- o Stating your belief that Darsi Ferrer is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned on spurious charges simply because of his activism to promote freedom of expression, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

SEND YOUR APPEALS TO:

PRESIDENT OF CUBA

Raúl Castro Ruz
Presidente de la República de Cuba
La Habana, Cuba
Fax: +53 7 8333085 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs) OR +1 2127791697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)
Email: cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)
Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your Excellency

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera
Fiscal General de la República,
Fiscalía General de la República, San Rafael 3,
La Habana, Cuba
Fax: +53 7 860 4268
Salutation: Señor Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

INTERIOR MINISTER

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra
Ministro del Interior y Prisiones
Ministerio del Interior, Plaza de la Revolución,
La Habana, Cuba
Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister