

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 25/004/2003

UA 54/03

Critical Health Condition- Hunger Strike

24 February 2003

CUBA

Leonardo Miguel Bruzón Avila, (POC), Prisoner of Conscience

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health of prisoner of conscience, Leonardo Miguel Bruzón Avila, who has reportedly been on hunger strike since 7 December. He is currently being held in a punishment cell and has been denied medical treatment. He is extremely underweight, and is suffering from other medical complications.

His family report that he is currently being held in an isolation cell, three metres by three metres. They claim his cell is continually wet due to leakage from a drainage pipe overhead. He has also been threatened with having his right to fresh air and family visits suspended.

This is the second time Leonardo Brúzon has been on hunger strike during his detention. In late August, six months after his arrest, he joined a number of detainees in prisons around Cuba on a hunger strike to protest at their continued detention without trial. On this occasion he was temporarily transferred from prison to a military hospital. He ended the strike on 23 October 2002,

Amnesty International understands that Leonardo Brúzon began his second hunger strike on 7 December 2002, whilst he was still in the military hospital. However, four days later, he was transferred to the Combinado del Este prison as punishment for this, despite his ill state of health.

His previous and current hunger strikes have provoked serious concerns for his already precarious state of health. Family members are greatly concerned by his symptoms which reportedly include: severe weight loss, fever, weakness, bruising and digestive problems. In addition Amnesty International has recently learned that he is also reportedly suffering from neurological disorders and involuntary spasms in his arms. His family have urgently requested that he receive specialist medical care in addition to that provided by the health service within the prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Leonardo Bruzón, who is over 60, is President of the unofficial *Movimiento Pro Derechos Humanos 24 de Febrero* (24 February Human Rights Movement). He was arrested on 23 Feb 2002, allegedly to prevent him from taking part in activities to commemorate the anniversary of 24 February 1996, the date when two planes belonging to a Cuban exile group were shot down by the Cuban air force. He has been detained ever since although, according to reports he has still not yet been charged or had a date set for a trial.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the health of Leonardo Bruzón Avila which is being adversely affected by the prison conditions in Combinado del Este, and asking that he receive the medical attention that he needs urgently;
- stating that you recognize that economic factors, including the US trade embargo, may affect standards of nutrition and medical care in prisons, but that conditions of detention should conform to internationally recognized minimum standards, such as those outlined in the UN *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* and the UN *Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*. This includes: ensuring that he has access to adequate medical care, adequate food and clothing, and the opportunity to exercise daily.
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release, as a prisoner of conscience detained for the non-violent exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO (Please note, fax numbers to Cuba can be unreliable. Please send your faxes via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs):

President

Su Excelencia

Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz

Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 333085 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Excelencia

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Felipe Pérez Roque (28/5/99)

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Calzada No. 360

Vedado

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 333085

E-mail: cubaminrex@minrex.gov.cu

Salutation: Dear Señor Ministro

Interior Secretary

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra

Ministerio del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior

Plaza de la Revolución

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 333085 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Dear Señor Director

COPIES TO:

Sr. Jacinto Granda de Laserna

Director, Diario *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 7 April 2003.