

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 25/05/96

20 February 1996

Further information on UA 08/96 (AMR 25/01/96, 16 January 1996) and follow-up (AMR 25/02/96, 17 January) - Arbitrary Detention / Harassment

CUBARaul Rivero CASTAÑEDA, journalist) both members of *Concilio*
Juan Antonio SANCHEZ, journalist) *Cubano*, Cuban Concilium

new names: Rafael Solano, Director of *Habana Press*

Dr Leonel MOREJÓN ALMAGRO, lawyer and National Organizer of *Concilio*
Cubano, Cuban Concilium

Lázaro GONZÁLEZ VALDÉS, deputy national organizer of *Concilio Cubano*

Mercedes PARADA ANTÚNEZ (f), deputy national organizer of *Concilio Cubano*

More members of non-governmental groups belonging to the *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium have been arrested by the Cuban authorities. The recent intensification of action against them appears to be aimed at preventing them from holding a national meeting on 24-27 February (see below). Amnesty International fears they may face imprisonment as prisoners of conscience, detained solely for attempting to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Rafael Solano, director of *Habana Press*, an independent press agency belonging to the *Buró de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (BPIC)*, Cuban Independent Press Bureau, which is part of the Concilium, was arrested by State Security officials on 19 February and taken to the 11th police unit in San Miguel del Padrón, Havana. No reasons were given for his arrest. He has been arrested several times since July 1995 and threatened with imprisonment if he did not give up his activities or leave the country.

Dr Leonel Morejón Almagro, national organizer of the Concilium, was arrested on 15 February at the BPIC office in Havana after a large police operation had closed off the area around the building for several hours. He was taken to a police station, where he reportedly went on hunger-strike. According to his mother, who was able to visit him briefly on 17 February, he was being subjected to pressure to sign statements he did not agree with. Since then he has reportedly been transferred to the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista.

Lázaro González Valdés and Mercedes Parada Antúnez, both deputy national organizers of the Concilium, were also arrested on 15 February following searches of their homes as a result of which documents belonging to the Concilium were confiscated. They were initially taken to police stations. Next day, Mercedes Parada Antúnez was transferred under police guard to the Hermanos Ameijeiras Hospital in Havana for a minor operation but was warned that she would still face various charges. Lázaro González Valdés was reported to have begun a hunger-strike while at the police station but is since believed to have been transferred to Villa Marista.

Amnesty International is also concerned by reports that Juan Antonio Sanchez was told by state security officers to report on 19 February to a police station in Havana. The organization has no further details about his current situation.

He was earlier arrested on 14 January, before being released the following day, but on release was reportedly warned to stop his journalistic work or face imprisonment.

Since 15 February some 25 other members of the Concilium have been arrested both in Havana and in other provinces, including Pinar del Río, Camagüey, Villa Clara and Santiago de Cuba. It has been hard to clarify what has happened to them though some are thought to have been released. In at least one case, the person was told that despite his release, charges would be brought against him for "illegal association", "enemy propaganda" and "disrespect".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Concilio Cubano is a broad coalition of over 100 non-governmental groups, including political and human rights groups and independent journalists, lawyers and trade unionists, which was set up in October 1995. Since then members of the groups belonging to the coalition have faced frequent short-term detention and harassment and have been warned that if they do not give up their activities or leave the country, they will be imprisoned on charges of spreading "enemy propaganda", "illegal association", "dangerousness" and others. *Concilio Cubano* has stressed its commitment to using only peaceful means to achieve its aims which include a call for free and direct elections as well as an amnesty for political prisoners and full respect for human rights. In December it requested permission from the authorities to hold a national meeting on 24-27 February. Although no decision had been formally communicated to them by the authorities, leaders of *Concilio Cubano* stated that they intended to go ahead with the meeting. Only after the arrest of Dr Morejón and others on 15 February did the Ministry of the Interior inform the group orally of its decision to ban the meeting. Acting leaders of the coalition have therefore said that the meeting will not now go ahead.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail letters in Spanish, otherwise English or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports of further arrests of members of the *Concilio Cubano*, including Dr Leonel Morejón Almagro, Lázaro González Valdés and Rafael Solano;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release as prisoners of conscience detained solely for their attempts to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression;
- requesting that any charges pending against Mercedes Parada Antúnez and other members of *Concilio Cubano* in connection with their peaceful activities on behalf of the group be dropped.

APPEALS TO:

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 fidge
Faxes: + 53 7 333164
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 / + 53 7 333085
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Department of State Security
Sr Director
Departamento de Seguridad del Estado
Villa Marista, La Víbora, La Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Director, Villa Marista, Havana, Cuba
Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Cuban Journalists' Union (official body)
Unión de Periodistas de Cuba
Calle 23 No. 452, Apdo 6646
Vedado, Havana, Cuba

Granma (daily newspaper)
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 10 April 1996.