

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 25/06/93

Distr: UA/SC

UA 247/93 Prisoner of Conscience/Health Concern/
Fear of Ill-treatment

30 July 1993

CUBA: Luis Alberto PITA SANTOS (46), prisoner of conscience
Jesús CHAMBES RAMIREZ, political prisoner

Amnesty International is concerned for the well-being of political prisoners Luis Alberto Pita Santos and Jesús Chambes Ramírez who reportedly have been subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. According to reports, since May 1993 they have been handcuffed and with chains on their ankles from 5 am until 9 pm in the Prisión Especial de Máxima Seguridad de Camagüey, Camaguey Special High Security Prison, also known as "Kilo 8".

Both prisoners have declared themselves to be what is known in Cuba as "*plantado*" - this is a form of protest in which political prisoners refuse to wear the uniform worn by common prisoners and to obey prison discipline in other ways. Pita Santos started his protest on 17 October 1992.

The state of health of Pita Santos, who has also undertaken several hunger strikes since his arrest on 9 October 1991, is described as delicate and he is said to have lost more than 80 lbs in weight. The only time relatives have been allowed to see him in recent months was on 13 April 1993 when he was being held for a short period in the prison infirmary.

On 22 April Pita Santos was injured after a prison official reportedly lifted him into the air several times and let him fall, apparently in an attempt to make him put on the prison uniform. He is said to have been on hunger strike again since early May. It is not clear what his current situation is.

Both prisoners are also said to have been beaten on several occasions during efforts by prison personnel to get them to put on the uniform and, in one case at least, to shave.

In the latter incident which took place in Boniato Prison in December 1992, Luis Alberto Pita Santos reportedly suffered a broken arm after guards tried to hold him down. Both prisoners were transferred to the prison in Camagüey in March 1993 after a protest by several political prisoners at the conditions in which they were held. Some of those involved reportedly rioted but it is not clear if Pita and Chambes were among them.

Luis Alberto Pita Santos, who is a former university professor, is President of the unofficial Asociación Defensora de los Derechos Políticos (ADDEPO), Association for the Defence of Political Rights. He was arrested on 9 October 1991 and brought to trial in April 1992 on charges of *desacato*, disrespect, *asociación ilícita*, illegal association, and *clandestinidad de impresos*, clandestine printing. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Amnesty International believes him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely on account of his peaceful and legitimate political activities. (See also UA 354/92, AMR 25/27/92, 12 November 1992)

Jesús Chambes Ramírez is believed to have been arrested in Santiago de Cuba in early 1992

for protesting against the government although the precise charge is not known. He is also thought to be a member of ADDEPO. He is said to have been beaten on several occasions while in detention, on one occasion allegedly to the point of unconsciousness. In November 1992, while held in Boniato Prison, he is said to have set fire to a special cell that is not used but preserved as a monument because President Fidel Castro was imprisoned there in 1953 under the Batista dictatorship. Following this incident his mother was reportedly told that he would be held incommunicado indefinitely. From the information so far available concerning the reasons for his arrest, it is not clear whether Jesús Chambes is a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Over the years Amnesty International has received many reports that political prisoners who have declared themselves to be "*plantados*" have been subjected to conditions that amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or torture. While acknowledging that many such prisoners may not have adhered to prison discipline and in some cases may have behaved violently, Amnesty International believes that in many instances the prison authorities have used excessive force and other inappropriate measures in their attempts to persuade the prisoners to give up their protest.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Luis Alberto Pita Santos and Jesús Chambes Ramírez have been beaten and held for long periods handcuffed and with chains on their feet in apparent attempts to get them to give up their protest;
- urging that a thorough investigation be carried out into the reports of ill-treatment and those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that they both be given all necessary medical treatment at all times and be permitted visits from their relatives;
- urging the immediate and unconditional release of Luis Alberto Pita Santos on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely because of his non-violent political beliefs.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz
Presidente de los Consejos de Estado
y de Ministros
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Salutation: Su Excelencia /
Your Excellency

Telegrams: Presidente Castro, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511331 [Ministry of Justice - asking them to forward your message to the President]

2) Attorney General:

Dr Ramón de la Cruz Ochoa
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Salutation: Sr Fiscal General /
Dear Attorney General

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511456 fidge

3) Minister of the Interior:

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

Salutation: Sr Ministro /
Dear Minister

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261

[These telex and fax numbers are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - please ask them to forward your message to General Colomé]

4) Director of "Kilo 8" Prison:

Sr Director
Prisión Especial de Máxima Seguridad de Camagüey
Carretera de Nuevitas
Albaiza, Camagüey
Cuba

Salutation: Sr Director /
Dear Director

Telegrams: Director, Prisión Especial Máxima Seguridad, Camagüey, Cuba

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
Ciudad de 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 10 September 1993.