

---

**CUBA** Leonardo Bruzón Avila, independent librarian and human rights defender

Human rights defender Leonardo Bruzón Avila was reportedly arrested on 5 September, after he set up an independent video library for children in the capital, Havana. Amnesty International fears that he may face an unfair trial and be jailed as a prisoner of conscience.

He is now held at a police detention centre in Havana, the *Departamento Técnico de Investigaciones* (DTI), Technical Investigations Department. As yet no charges are known to have been brought against him.

He reportedly opened the video library on 12 August, with a screening of the Disney film *Hercules*, which many children came to. Leonardo Bruzón is President of the *Movimiento Pro Derechos Humanos 24 de Febrero*, 24 February Human Rights Movement named for the date in 1996 on which two planes belonging to a Cuban exile group were shot down by the Cuban airforce. He named the library, in his home in Havana, "The 24 February Library". The authorities issued a warrant for his arrest and the eviction of him and his family. Leonardo Bruzón went into hiding until his arrest. It is not known whether the eviction order has been carried out.

Leonardo Bruzón has been repeatedly detained and harassed. In August this year he and other opponents of the government were arrested and briefly detained to prevent them taking part in a demonstration calling for the release of political prisoners, in which they were planning to stand with candles in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary in the *Virgen del Camino* park in Havana. On 3 December 2000 he and other dissidents were detained to prevent them taking part in a demonstration to celebrate Human Rights Day. Leonardo Bruzón was not released for two months.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The media in Cuba is controlled by the state, and freedom of expression, association and assembly are severely limited. The first independent library was started in 1998 in Las Tunas by a couple who were reportedly motivated by comments made at a book fair by President Fidel Castro, who said there were no banned books in Cuba, only limited funds with which to buy books for public libraries. Since then many independent libraries have been set up, and many librarians have been detained, harassed and threatened with arrest if they continue their work, or asked to leave the country.

Leonardo Bruzón recently said that he had set up the 24 February library for "the promotion of activities of a cultural nature ... every Sunday we will screen films for children and young people". (*"La biblioteca '24 de Febrero' promueve actividades de índole cultural ... cada domingo exhibiremos filmes para los niños y jóvenes ..."*).

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

- expressing concern that Leonardo Bruzón Avila has been detained;
- urging that he be released or charged with a criminal offence;

- expressing concern that he may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- urging that he be granted access to a lawyer of his choice;
- urging that independent librarians and journalists be permitted to carry out their legitimate peaceful activities without interference from the authorities.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr Felipe Pérez Roque  
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores  
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores  
Calzada No. 360  
Vedado, La Habana, Cuba

**Telegrams: Ministro Relaciones Exteriores, Havana, Cuba**

**Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / 335261**

**Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

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**

**Faxes: +53 7 33 5261 / 537 301566**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

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 24 October 2001.