

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 296/94 (AMR 25/10/94, 11 August 1994) - Prisoners of Conscience

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Amnesty International has learned that all the above people were released at most five or six days after their arrest on 6 August. As far as is known, only one of them, René del Pozo, who was held the longest, has any possible charges pending against him. He was initially held at State Security headquarters and was later transferred to a police unit. Most of the detainees had their homes searched at the time of arrest. It is believed that in the case of René del Pozo, the authorities claim to have found an item for which he was unable to produce proof of legitimate ownership and that he may therefore be facing a minor charge relating to that. Tough new laws have recently been introduced in a crackdown on black market activity which is reportedly widespread in the context of the economic crisis facing Cuba at present.

The 19 were among dozens of people arrested in the wake of anti-government protests on 5 August. Amnesty International believes that they were singled out because of their involvement in unofficial political and human rights groups who try to send reports abroad about human rights issues. Several of them have been detained and questioned about their activities in the past or subjected to serious harassment by members of the security forces or Rapid Response Brigades. Fernando Velázquez Medina had only been released from prison in November 1993 after serving a two-year sentence for illegal association and defamation as a result of his activities with an unofficial group called **Criterio Alternativo**, Alternative View.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.