

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 25/018/2005

05 August 2005

UA 206/05      Possible prisoners of conscience/legal concern

CUBA            René Gómez Manzano (m), aged 63  
                  Oscar Mario González (m), aged 61  
                  Julio César López Rodríguez (m), aged 38  
                  Twelve other protestors (all male)

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René Gómez Manzano, Oscar Mario González and Julio César López Rodríguez were detained in the capital Havana after participating in a peaceful demonstration against the Cuban government on 22 July. They could face up to 20 years in prison. Six other men arrested at the demonstration remain in detention, along with six men detained on 13 July during another peaceful event in Havana. Amnesty International believes that all fifteen men may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

On 22 July, approximately 30 people were arrested as they tried to participate in a peaceful demonstration which took place outside the French Embassy in Havana, demanding the release of political prisoners in Cuba. They were arrested at home, on their way to the demonstration or on the sidelines of the gathering. Nine of them remain in detention. State security police officers have apparently informed the families of René Gómez Manzano, Oscar Mario González and Julio César López Rodríguez that the three men will be charged under the *Ley de Protección de la Independencia Nacional y la Economía de Cuba*, (Law for the Protection of the National Independence and Economy of Cuba) known simply as Law 88. It is thought that René Gómez Manzano and Oscar Mario González are currently being held at the *Unidad de la Policía Nacional Revolucionaria del Municipio Playa* (National Revolutionary Police Unit in the Municipality of Playa). Amnesty International has no information on the whereabouts of Julio César López.

On 13 July around 20 people were detained whilst participating in a peaceful event in Havana. They were commemorating the “13 de Marzo” tugboat disaster of 1994, in which some 35 people were killed while attempting to flee Cuba when their boat was reportedly rammed by the Cuban authorities (see AMR 25/13/97, July 1997). Six of those detained on 13 July remain in custody, charged with “*desordenes públicos*” (public disorders), which carries a maximum sentence of three years' imprisonment. The majority are thought to be detained in the *Departamento Técnico de Investigaciones* (Technical Department of Investigations) in Havana.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Law 88, introduced in February 1999, calls for seven to 15 years' imprisonment for passing information to the United States that could be used to bolster anti-Cuban measures such as the US economic blockade. This would rise to 20 years if the information is acquired surreptitiously. The legislation also bans the ownership, distribution or reproduction of “*subversive materials*” from the US government, and proposes terms of imprisonment of up to five years for collaborating with radio and TV stations and publications deemed to be assisting US policy.

In March 2003 Cuban authorities arrested 75 dissidents. They were subjected to summary trials and were quickly sentenced to long prison terms of up to 28 years, some of these were under Law 88.

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

- expressing concern at the detention of René Gómez Manzano, Oscar Mario González, Julio César López Rodríguez and 12 other men, following their participation in peaceful events in Havana on 13 July and 22 July;
- stating that Amnesty International believes them to have been detained solely for peacefully attempting to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and could therefore be considered prisoners of conscience;
- calling for the 15 men to be released immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried according to international standards for fair trial;
- urging that they be granted immediate access to lawyers of their choosing and any necessary medical assistance;
- condemning the authorities' apparent criminalization of the right to freedom of expression, including the right to participate in peaceful demonstrations.

**APPEALS TO: (It may be difficult to get through to these numbers, please keep trying)**

Head of State and Government

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz

Presidente de los Consejos de Estados y de Ministros

La Habana, Cuba

**Fax: + 53 7 8333085 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or + 1 2127791697 (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)**

**Email: f\_castro@cuba.gov.cu or cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)**

**Salutation: Su Excelencia/ Your Excellency**

Attorney-General

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera

Fiscal General de la República,

Fiscalía General de la República

San Rafael 3, La Habana, Cuba

**Fax: + 53 7 669 485 / 333 164**

**Salutation: Señor 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

**Fax:+ 53 7 8333 085**

**E-mail: cubaminrex@minrex.gov.cu**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

Interior Secretary

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior

Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba

**Fax: + 53 7 8301 566**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

**COPIES 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 16 September 2005.