

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 25/20/97

UA 221/97

Arbitrary arrest/Legal concern/  
prisoner of conscience (POC)

18 July 1997

CUBAVladimiro ROCA ANTUNES

María Beatriz ROQUE CABELLO

René GOMEZ MANZANO

Felix A. BONNE CARCASES

Luis LOPEZ PRENDES, journalist

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Amnesty International is seeking the immediate and unconditional release of prisoners of conscience Vladimiro Roca Antunes, María Beatriz Roque Cabello, René Gómez Manzano and Felix A. Bonne Carcasés - all members of the *Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna para el Análisis de la Situación Socio-Económica Cubana*, the Internal Dissidents' Working Group for the Analysis of the Cuban Socio-Economic Situation - and of Luis López Prendes, a journalist working for the independent press agency, *Buró de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (BPIC)*, Cuban Independent Press Bureau.

According to reports, in the early hours of 16 July 1997 State Security officials went to the home in Havana of Working Group member Vladimiro Roca Antunes, who is also a member of the unofficial *Partido Social Demócrata Cubano*, Cuban Social Democratic Party. They searched his home for several hours and confiscated a large number of documents and a computer. Roca himself was taken to the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista. Previously, on 3 July 1997, he had reported that State Security officials had thrown stones at his home during the previous night and broken two windows.

The other three members of the Working Group were detained in similar circumstances on the same day and are also said to be in Villa Marista. A spokesperson for the Cuban Foreign Ministry reportedly stated yesterday that the four Working Group members were being held under investigation for "counter-revolutionary activities".

On 27 June 1997 the detainees had held a press conference for foreign journalists during which they criticized an official discussion document entitled *El Partido de la Unidad, la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos que Defendemos*, "The Party of Unity, Democracy and the Human Rights We Defend", which is being circulated within the country as a prelude to the Communist Party Congress, to be held later this year. They also presented the journalists with their own analysis of the document entitled *La Patria es de Todos*, "The Homeland is for Everyone". Immediately afterwards some 40 members of several unofficial groups who have formed a support committee for the Internal Dissidents' Working Group were reportedly detained but all were released within hours or days.

As well as belonging to the Working Group, María Beatriz Roque Cabello is also a member of the unofficial *Instituto Cubano de Economistas Independientes*, Cuban Institute of Independent Economists; René Gómez Manzano is a lawyer belonging to an unofficial lawyers' group called the *Corriente Agramontista*, Agramontist Current; and Felix A. Bonne Carcasés is a member of the unofficial *Corriente Cívica Cubana*, Cuban Civic Current.

Journalist Luis López Prendes, of the independent press agency, *Buró de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (BPIC)*, Cuban Independent Press Bureau, was also reportedly detained on the morning of 16 July 1997 in Havana though no further details are so far available and it is not yet clear whether his detention is connected to those of the Working Group members.

Amnesty International believes that all the above-mentioned detainees have been detained simply for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association, and as such are prisoners of conscience.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

All media in Cuba are state-controlled and freedom of expression, association and assembly are severely limited. Over the past few years, a number of non-governmental organizations, involving political and human rights activists, independent journalists and trade unionists, economists, lawyers and others, have been formed. However, none has been granted official permission to operate even when they have made the appropriate application to the Ministry of Justice for recognition (their requests usually go unanswered).

In 1995 the Cuban Government began a major crackdown on dissidents, following the formation of *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium, a forum of over 100 unofficial groups, including human rights groups, independent professional associations and political parties. Since then members of *Concilio Cubano* and journalists working for independent organization have been subjected to persistent harassment and frequent short-term detention. They have also been threatened with long-term imprisonment and occasionally physical violence if they do not cease their activities or leave the country. A few have been brought to trial and imprisoned as prisoners of conscience. For further information, see *Cuba: Government Crackdown on Dissent*, AMR 25/14/96, April 1996 and *Cuba: Dissidents Imprisoned or Forced into Exile*, AMR 25/29/96, July 1996.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:**

- urging that Vladimiro Roca Antunes, María Beatriz Roque Cabello, René Gómez Manzano, Felix A. Bonne Carcasés and José López Prendes be immediately and unconditionally released, on the grounds that they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association;
- urging that as long as they are in detention, they be provided with full judicial guarantees, including immediate access to a lawyer of their choice.

#### **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**

**Telex: 511456 fisge**

**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**

**Telex: 511122 / 511464 / 512950**

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

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

3) 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**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

4) 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

Apartado 6646

Vedado, Havana

Cuba

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 29 August 1997.