

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR

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To: Medical professionals

From: Medical Office / Americas Regional Program

Date: 19 August 1997

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Dr Desi MENDOZA Rivero
CUBA

Keywords

Theme: POC

Profession/association: doctor

Summary

Amnesty International is calling for the release of Dr Desi Mendoza who was arrested in June 1997 and imprisoned, reportedly in connection with a critique he had made of the handling of a dengue fever epidemic in Santiago de Cuba in the east of the country. AI has adopted Dr Mendoza as a prisoner of conscience and is also seeking assurances that he will receive whatever care is needed for his heart problems.

Recommended Actions

Letters from medical professionals, preferably written in Spanish or your own language, should be sent to the addresses below:

- o urging that Dr Desi Mendoza of Santiago de Cuba be immediately and unconditionally released on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience;*

- o expressing concern at his state of health (you could note that he reportedly has cardiac problems) and urging that he be given access to a doctor and to a lawyer of his choice;*

- o asking for details of his current situation and for details of any medical care he is receiving*

- o seeking guarantees that he will be well treated*

Addresses (see over)

Addresses

Sr. Carlos Dotres Martínez (Minister of Public Health)
 Ministro de la Salud Pública
 Ministerio de la Salud Pública
 Calle 23, No. 301
 Vedado, La Habana, Cuba
 Telex: 511149
 (Salutation: Señor Ministro)

Dr. Juan Escalona Reguera (Attorney General of the Republic)
 Fiscal General de la (State Prosecutor)
 República
 Fiscalía General de la
 República
 San Rafael 3
 La Habana, Cuba
 Tel: + 53 7 333164 / 320411
 Fax: + 53 7 333164
 (Salutation: Señor Fiscal General)

Sr. Jefe del Centro de (Head of the Investigation Centre of the
 Investigaciones del Department of State Security in Santiago de
 Cuba)
 Departamento de Seguridad
 del Estado (DSE)
 Versalles
 Santiago de Cuba
 Prov. Oriente, Cuba
 (Salutation: Señor Director)

Sr. Director (Director of Aguadores Prison)
 Prisión de Aguadores
 Santiago de Cuba
 Prov. Oriente, Cuba

(Salutation: Sr. Director)

Please send copies of your letters to:

Sr. Roberto Robaina González (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Calzada No. 360

Vedado

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 333085 +53 7 335261

(Salutation: Señor Ministro)

and to the Cuban diplomatic representative in your country, or if there is not one, then to the nearest one.

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IMPRISONED DOCTOR

Dr Desi MENDOZA Rivero
CUBA

Dr Desi Mendoza Rivero, aged 42 and married with four children (including one infant), was reportedly detained on 25 June 1997 in Santiago de Cuba in the east of the country and taken to the State Security headquarters at Versailles. On 12 August 1997 he was transferred to Aguadores Prison, also in Santiago de Cuba. The authorities have not made any public statements about the reasons for his arrest. However, unofficial sources attribute his detention to statements he had made regarding an epidemic of dengue fever in Santiago de Cuba which, according to him, had caused several deaths. He reportedly accused the authorities of covering up the true extent of the epidemic and of not taking sufficient measures to control it. He is believed to be facing various charges, possibly including "enemy propaganda", "dissemination of false news" and "illegal association".

Dr Mendoza is reported to have uncontrolled hypertension (*presión arterial descontrolada*) with a cardiac arrhythmia—conditions which make exertion and stress highly undesirable. Amnesty International has adopted him as a prisoner of conscience and is seeking his immediate and unconditional release from prison.

Background

Dr Mendoza established the *Colegio Médico Independiente de Santiago de Cuba* (Santiago de Cuba Independent Medical Association, of which he is president) in 1994. As a result, a short time later he lost his job according to AI's information. It is not clear whether he has worked since. Journalist Juan Carlos Céspedes of the *Agencia de Prensa Libre Oriental (APLO)*, Oriente Free Press Agency, based in Santiago de Cuba, was also arrested, on 12 June 1997, and reportedly questioned about an article he wrote on the dengue epidemic. He was released on 18 June and it is not clear if he is facing charges. Another APLO journalist, Daisy Carcasés Valle, who wrote about the dengue epidemic, was detained briefly on 15 August 1997 and threatened with imprisonment.

The arrest of Dr Mendoza has taken place in the context of a general crackdown by the authorities, with several independent activists and other dissidents being arrested in other parts of Cuba in recent weeks.