

UA 307/98 Arrest of human rights defender

9 December 1998

CUBANestor Rodríguez Lobaina

The Cuban authorities have arrested and detained human rights defender Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina to stop him attending a conference in Paris marking the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International considers Nestor Rodríguez a prisoner of conscience and is calling on the Cuban authorities to free him immediately.

Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina, who is president of the *Movimiento de Jóvenes Cubanos por la Democracia*, (MJCD), Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy, was arrested with his father, Ramón Rodríguez Azares, on 7 December 1998. It is believed he was arrested after trying to organize a demonstration in protest at the refusal to grant him permission to leave the country.

Ramón Rodríguez was released soon after the arrest but Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina remains in detention in the "*Departamento Técnico de Investigaciones*", "Technical Department for investigation", in Havana, the Cuban capital. He has reportedly started a hunger strike to protest against his arrest, which he intends to continue throughout the duration of the human rights defenders congress in Paris.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina was previously arrested in 8 April 1997 and sentenced to 18 months in prison for "*desacato*", "disrespect", and "*resistencia a las autoridades*", resisting authority", after criticising the Fourteenth Youth and Student Festival.

During his imprisonment, Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina went on hunger strike and the authorities transferred him to a punishment cell where he was reportedly held in very cramped conditions for at least two months. His state of health deteriorated as a result of the hunger strike and he had to spend time in the prison infirmary.

Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina was also arrested on 6 June 1996, reportedly in connection with the MJCD's peaceful attempts to organize a movement for university reform in the capital. He was sentenced to 12 months "*limitación de libertad*", "restricted liberty", as well as "*destierro*", internal exile or confinement, for a period of five years in his home town of Baracoa, Guantánamo province.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina on 7 December 1998 and urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully attempting to exercise his right to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and freedom of movement;
- reminding the government of Cuba of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression" and Article 13: "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country".

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
Telexes: 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
Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950
Faxes: + 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

COPIES TO:

National Union of Jurists
Unión Nacional de Juristas
Apartado 4161
La Habana 4, 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.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression"
Article 19 , Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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