

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 25/37/97

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 25 per Section.

EXTRA 139/97

Prisoners of Conscience / Possible POCs /
Legal Concern

17 October 1997

CUBARicardo GONZALEZ ALFONSO, journalist
Daula CARPIO MATA (f), member of the unofficial *Partido Pro Derechos Humanos en Cuba* (PPDHC), Party for Human Rights in Cuba
Jenny Julio GODOY CARPIO (f), 15, Daula Carpio Mata's daughter
María Felicia MATA MACHADO (f), 54, Daula Carpio Mata's mother
Roxanna CARPIO MATA (f), Daula Carpio Mata's sister
Ileana PEÑALVER DUQUE (f)
Vicente GARCIA RAMOS
Guillermo FARIÑA CABEZA
Lilian MENESES MARTINEZ (f)
Iván LEMUS ROMERO
José Antonio ALVARADO ALMEIDA
José Miguel LLERA BENITEZ
Danilo SANTOS MENDEZ
Abel FLEITES MENDEZ

Since 9 October 1997, the Cuban authorities have carried out a wave of arrests of government critics. Amnesty International believes that at least one of the detainees, a journalist, is being held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, and that other of the detainees may also be prisoners of conscience.

On 16 October, Ricardo González Alfonso, a journalist working for the independent press agency *Cuba Press* who had in the previous few days disseminated reports about alleged human rights violations in Santa Clara, was arrested at his home in Havana by two Interior Ministry officials who reportedly warned that he could face long-term imprisonment. It is not yet clear where he is being detained. It is feared that while in detention he may be subjected to pressure to agree to leave the country unless he ceases his journalistic activities as has happened with several other journalists working for independent press agencies over the past year.

Ricardo González Alfonso had been reporting on the following events that had occurred in Santa Clara, Villa Clara province. On 9 October, Daula Carpio Mata, who is the provincial delegate of the unofficial *Partido Pro Derechos Humanos en Cuba* (PPDHC), Party for Human Rights in Cuba, for Villa Clara Province and had reportedly been under house arrest since 7 August 1997, was arrested in her home in Santa Clara and taken to Guamajal Women's Prison to await trial. She has reportedly been charged with verbally intimidating a prison doctor and a two-year prison sentence is being sought. Amnesty International is seeking further information about the allegations against her but believes that the charge may have been brought against her as punishment for her political views.

On the day of her arrest, a group of PPDHC members who were gathered together in a house in Santa Clara declared themselves to be on hunger-strike in protest at the arrest. Pro-government supporters, apparently at the instigation of officials, reportedly gathered outside the house and shouted abuse at the hunger-strikers. During 14 October police entered the house and at different times arrested 12 people, including the mother, sister and daughter of Daula Carpio Mata. The 12 were reportedly taken to several different detention

centres in Santa Clara. Jenny Julia Godoy Carpio, Daula Carpio's 15-year-old daughter, was reportedly taken to the Santa Clara Minors' Re-education Centre where she is believed to still be on hunger-strike. The precise reasons for the arrest of the 12 are unclear.

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.

Members of such unofficial groups are frequently subjected to harassment and short-term detention. They are also often threatened with long-term imprisonment and occasionally physical violence if they do not cease their activities or leave the country. Since early 1996 several have been brought to trial and imprisoned as prisoners of conscience and several journalists have succumbed to pressures to leave the country (see *Cuba: Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics*, AMR 25/29/97, August 1997).

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

- seeking the immediate and unconditional release of Ricardo González Alfonso on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- requesting the Cuban authorities to release immediately and unconditionally the 12 hunger-strikers detained in Santa Clara on 14 October unless they are charged with recognizable criminal offences;
- requesting that all those still in detention, including Ricardo González Alfonso and Daula Carpio Mata, be permitted immediate access to a lawyer of their choice as well as family visits and any necessary medical attention.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Interior

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior

Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba

Faxes: + 53 7 33 5261 (attn: Ministro del Interior)

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

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 333085 / +53 7 333460

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

3) 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

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 17 November 1997.