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Amnesty International reaction to release of activists in Cuba

In response to news that the Cuban authorities will release the last remaining activists from the group of 75 detained in March 2003, Amnesty International's expert on Cuba, Gerardo Ducos, said:

"It is a step in the right direction for human rights in Cuba to see the release of all prisoners of conscience from the March 2003 crackdown and an activist detained last December, particularly considering they should have never been imprisoned in the first place."

"What we want to see now is for the Cuban authorities not to force activists into exile as a condition for their release and to ensure all human rights activists are able to carry out their legitimate work without fear of threats, harassment, further arrests or unfair trials in their own country."

Background Information

Seventy-five people were jailed in a massive crackdown against the dissident movement around 18 March 2003 for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

Most of them were charged with crimes including "acts against the independence of the state" because they allegedly received funds and/or materials from US-based NGOs financed by the US government.

They were sentenced to between six and 28 years in prison after speedy and unfair trials for engaging in activities the authorities perceived as subversive and damaging to Cuba.