

CUBA

New Cases of Prisoners of Conscience and Possible Prisoners of Conscience

Amnesty International is concerned at a recent increase in the number of critics of the Cuban Government who have been brought to trial and imprisoned because of their peaceful attempts to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. Over the past two or three years, hundreds of members of unofficial groups of different kinds, including human rights defenders, have been detained for short periods and threatened with being brought to trial if they do not give up their activities or go into exile. A few have resorted to exile in the face of such pressures but until mid-1997, with a few notable exceptions, the threats made against those who had been released and remained in the country had not been carried out. However, in the past few months at least 24 government critics have been imprisoned as prisoners of conscience. Most have been convicted but some are still awaiting trial. Some have been charged with offences against state security, such as “*propaganda enemiga*”, “enemy propaganda”, while others have been charged with offences against authority, such as “*desacato*”, “disrespect”, “*difamación*”, “defamation”, “*desobediencia*”, “disobedience”, or “*resistencia*”, “resistance”, or other kinds of common law offences. In some cases, the charges are believed to have been fabricated in order to discredit them or their organization. Trials in political cases generally fall short of international fair trial standards, particularly with regard to access to defence counsel. In cases of crimes against state security, which are tried in provincial courts, the defendant can be held for several weeks or months with little or no access to a lawyer. During this period, the detainee is often subjected to psychological pressures, including threats against his own physical integrity or that of members of his family, and coerced into signing false statements or agreeing to leave the country. In cases tried in municipal courts, the hearing can take place within a day or so of arrest and, while in theory being permitted to appoint a defence lawyer, the detainee often does not have the opportunity to do so in practice. Lawyers who take on the defence of political prisoners often face reprisals themselves for having done so (see below).

Amnesty International believes that there are several hundred prisoners of conscience serving sentences in Cuban prisons. It is impossible to give a precise figure because the authorities do not make such information public and human rights monitoring, by either domestic or international human rights monitors, is severely limited. In fact, several of those in detention have been imprisoned because of their efforts to disseminate information about alleged human rights violations.

Some of the information provided in this document updates cases referred to in *Cuba: Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics*, AMR 25/29/97, August 1997. The majority of the 150 people whose arrest was reported in the earlier document were released, usually after a few days or weeks and mostly without formal charge. However, in most cases they were warned that charges would be brought against them in the future if they did not give up their activities and some have been subjected to further short-term detention and harassment (see below). A few, including **Aguileo Cancio Chong**, president of the unofficial *Partido Acción Nacionalista (PAN)*, National Action Party, released in November

1997 and **Alberto Perera Martínez**, president of the unofficial *Comité Paz, Progreso y Libertad*, Peace, Progress and Liberty Committee, released in September 1997, were held for between three and six months before being released, apparently without charge. At least one of those who had been detained - **Héctor Peraza Linares**, a journalist working for the independent press agency *Habana Press*, Havana Press - was effectively forced into exile after being held for three months, from 23 June until 23 September 1997, by State Security in Pinar del Río. During that period he had no access to a lawyer. He was only released after paying a fine and agreeing to leave the country under threat that if he did not do so, he would be brought to trial on state security charges. On 15 December 1997 he left Cuba for Spain.

Several others of those mentioned in the earlier document were only released after they had paid a fine. It was not clear what the legal basis for the fine was in most cases. For example, **Blanca Nieve Cruz Rivera**, president of the unofficial *Frente Cívico Humanitario Frank País*, Frank País Civic Humanitarian Front, who had been detained on 11 July 1997 was only released on 29 September 1997 after payment of a fine. Earlier reports had indicated that she was facing a possible state security charge. Others who were reportedly released on payment of a fine were **Heriberto Leyva Rodríguez**, of the unofficial *Movimiento Cubano Jóvenes por la Democracia*, Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy, who was released shortly after his arrest on 13 July 1997 despite having been expected to face trial on a charge of "disrespect", and **Máximo Robaina Hernández**, a member of the unofficial *Frente Cívico Pro Derechos Humanos Máximo Gómez*, Máximo Gómez Civic Front for Human Rights, who was detained between 23 June and 24 September 1997 in San Juan y Martínez, Pinar del Río.

Amongst those who have faced further short-term detentions and continuing threats of imprisonment are: **Juan Carlos Chávez Ruiz**, of the unofficial *Movimiento Cubano Reflexión*, Cuban Reflection Movement, who was reportedly summoned by police on four occasions between September and November 1997; **María de los Angeles González Amaro**, of the *Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (APIC)*, Cuban Independent Press Agency, who was detained briefly in November 1997; **Librado Linares García**, secretary general of the unofficial *Movimiento Cuban Reflexión*, Cuban Reflection Movement, who was detained three times in September and October 1997; and **Luis López Prendes**, a journalist working for the *Buró de Periodistas Independientes de Cuba (BPIC)*, Bureau of Independent Journalists of Cuba, who was detained briefly in November 1997.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International believes that the following 24 prisoners are prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their peaceful attempts to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release:

Ana María Agramonte Crespo¹, president of the unofficial *Movimiento Acción Nacionalista*, National Action Movement, remains imprisoned at the *Centro de Reeducación de Mujeres de Occidente*, Women's Re-education Centre in Havana (the main prison for women nicknamed "Manto Negro"). She was arrested on 1 May 1997, Labour Day, after reportedly refusing to obey a police order to stay at home that day. She was tried on 16 May 1997 and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, charged with "disrespect" and "resistance".

Reinaldo Alfaro García², vice-president of the unofficial *Asociación de Lucha Frente a la Injusticia (ALFIN)*, Association for Struggle against Injustice, and a member of the executive of the unofficial *Partido Solidaridad Democrático (PSD)*, Democratic Solidarity Party, was detained on 8 May 1997 after reportedly calling for an amnesty for political prisoners. He is being held at the Combinado del Este Prison, Havana province, and is said to be awaiting trial on a charge of "enemy propaganda".

Bernardo Arévalo Padrón, the director of *Linea Sur Press*, an independent press agency based in Cienfuegos, was detained by State Security on 14 August 1997 in Aguada de Pasajeros and released three days later to await trial. Initial reports indicated that he was to be tried on a charge of "defamation", reportedly on the grounds that he had insulted various government officials, including President Fidel Castro, in his articles. However, at his trial on 28 November 1997, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for "enemy propaganda", which was confirmed on appeal. He is reportedly serving his sentence in Ariza Prison, Cienfuegos province.

Félix A. Bonné Carcasés³, a former university professor and member of the *Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna para el Análisis de la Situación Socio-Económica Cubana*, Internal Dissidents' Working Group for the Analysis of the Cuban Socio-Economic Situation, was arrested on 16 July 1997, along with three other members of the group. As of December 1997, he was being held in Guanajay Prison, Havana province, where he is awaiting trial on charges which are believed to include "enemy propaganda" and possibly others. He is reportedly suffering from heart problems and diabetes.

¹ See *Cuba: Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics*, AMR 25/29/97, August 1997, for full details.

² *idem.*

³ *idem.*

Daula Carpio Mata, the provincial delegate of the unofficial *Partido Pro Derechos Humanos en Cuba (PPDHC)*, Party for Human Rights in Cuba, for Villa Clara Province was first arrested on 7 August 1997 in Santa Clara on a charge of “*atentado*”, “assault”, on the grounds that she had verbally intimidated a prison doctor at the trial of fellow PPDHC member and prisoners of conscience Israel Feliciano García⁴ in late July 1997. She was released pending trial and told to remain at home. On 9 October 1997 she was unexpectedly re-arrested and taken to Guamajal Women’s Prison, Villa Clara province, to await trial. She was subsequently tried on 29 October and sentenced to 16 months’ “correctional work with internment”. Her sentence was ratified on appeal on 8 December 1997. Reports indicate that the prison doctor, who was one of the prosecution witnesses, may have been pressurized by State Security to testify against her. Amnesty International believes that, from the information available, there is no credible basis for the charge against her and that it was brought solely to prevent her from carrying out her peaceful political and human rights activities. She was ordered to present herself at a work centre on 12 December. She did not do so, reportedly for health reasons. She had been fasting since mid-October (see case of Roxana Carpio Mata and others below) and was said to be suffering from sharp pains in her ears and a constant headache. On 16 December she was taken from her home to Guamajal Womens’ Prison, despite showing the police a doctor’s note recommending she take complete rest. As of early January 1998, she was continuing her fast, reportedly consuming only coffee and water.

Roxana Carpio Mata, sister of Daula Carpio Mata (see above). When Daula Carpio was re-arrested on 9 October 1997, a group of twelve PPDHC members who were gathered together at the home of Iván Lema Romero (see below) in Santa Clara, started a fast in protest at the arrest. Their action, which involved consuming only liquids, attracted public attention because it coincided with the state funeral of Ernesto “Che” Guevara⁵, whose remains had recently been returned to Cuba from Bolivia, and many foreigners, including journalists, were in the town for the event. On 14 October police entered the house and at different times arrested 12 people, including the mother, sister and 15-year-old daughter of Daula Carpio Mata. On 23 October ten of them were brought to trial in the Santa Clara municipal court (the other two detainees, including Daula Carpio’s daughter, had been released). They were charged with “*asociación para delinquir*”, “associating with others to commit a crime”, and “disobedience”. Amnesty International believes that the action against them was taken solely to prevent them from peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of assembly, association and

⁴ Israel Feliciano García had been sentenced in early 1997 to five months’ imprisonment after refusing to pay a fine imposed on him for attending a meeting of *Concilio Cubano* in 1996. A few days before he was due to be released, a new charge of “disrespect” was brought against him. At his trial in July 1997, he was sentenced to an additional three months’ imprisonment. He has since been released.

⁵ Heroe of the Cuban Revolution who had been killed by the Bolivian army in Bolivia in 1967.

expression. Roxana Carpio Mata was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, confirmed on appeal, and initially sent to Guamajal Womens' Prison, Villa Clara province, where she continued her fast. On 20 November she was transferred to hospital where it was discovered that she was pregnant. She then reportedly gave up her fast and was returned to the same prison.

Ricardo de Armas Hernández, provincial delegate of the unofficial *Partido Pro Derechos Humanos en Cuba*, Party for Human Rights in Cuba, in Matanzas, was sentenced in July 1997 to six or nine months' imprisonment after being convicted on a charge of "disrespect". He had been arrested on 14 May 1997 and taken to Agüica Prison, Matanzas. In September 1997 he was reportedly beaten up by two common law prisoners. He may have been released since then but this has not yet been confirmed.

Pascual Escalona Naranjo⁶ was arrested on 14 June 1997 in Manzanillo, Granma province, released and re-arrested on 22 July 1997. He was brought to trial on 24 July 1997 on a charge of "*peligrosidad*", "dangerousness",⁷ and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. Amnesty International believes that the charge was brought against him in reprisal for his own activities in defence of freedom of expression and association as well as the activities of his wife, Mirta Leiva, who is a correspondent for the *Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (APIC)*, Cuban Independent Press Agency.

Radamés García de la Vega⁸, vice-president of the unofficial *Movimiento Cubano Jóvenes por la Democracia*, Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy, was arrested on 30 April 1997 in Palma Soriano, Santiago de Cuba province. He was sentenced on 17 June 1997 to eighteen months' "correctional work with internment", after being convicted of "*desacato a la figura del Comandante en Jefe*", "disrespect towards the Commander in Chief" (i.e. President Fidel Castro). Initially he was permitted to remain at home because of ill health but in mid-July he began his sentence at *Prisión Correccional Pepe Blanca*, Gota Blanca Reformatory, in Palma Soriano.

Vicente García Ramos. One of twelve PPDHC members who were arrested on 14 October 1997 in Santa Clara. See the case of Roxana Carpio Mata above for background. He was

⁶ See *Cuba: Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics*, AMR 25/29/97, August 1997, for full details.

⁷ A section of the penal code entitled "The Dangerous State and Security Measures", under which a person can be imprisoned for up to four years if s/he is considered to have a special proclivity to commit crimes and may be about to commit an offence. See "*Cuba: Hundreds Imprisoned for Dangerousness*", AMR 25/01/94, February 1994, for further details.

⁸ *idem*.

sentenced to 18 months' "correctional work with internment", confirmed on appeal, which he is serving in Villa Clara Provincial Prison. He is believed to have stopped his fast.

René Gómez Manzano⁹, a lawyer and founder of the independent lawyer's group *Corriente Agramontista*, Agramontist Current, and a member of the *Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna para el Análisis de la Situación Socio-Económica Cubana*, Internal Dissidents' Working Group for the Analysis of the Cuban Socio-Economic Situation, was arrested on 16 July 1997, along with three other members of the group. At the time of writing he is being held in Agüica Prison, Matanzas province, awaiting trial on charges which are believed to include "enemy propaganda".

Iván Lema Romero. One of twelve PPDHC members arrested on 14 October 1997 in Santa Clara. See the case of Roxana Carpio Mata above for background. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, confirmed on appeal. He started his sentence in Guamajal Prison but was later transferred to Manacas Prison, Santa Clara, Villa Clara province, where, according to reports received in early January 1998, he was continuing his fast and had been transferred to the prison infirmary.

José Manuel Llera Benítez. One of twelve PPDHC members arrested on 14 October 1997 in Santa Clara. See the case of Roxana Carpio Mata above for background. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, confirmed on appeal, which he is serving in Las Grimas Prison, Placetas, Villa Clara province. As of mid-December, he was still fasting and was said to be suffering from pains in his joints, vomiting and dizziness. Reports indicated that prison officials had unsuccessfully tried to get common prisoners to provoke him by offering them extra privileges. As of early January 1998, he had reportedly been transferred to a punishment cell for refusing to work while in prison but was continuing his fast.

Adel Sigfredo Martínez Armenteros, member of the national executive of the unofficial *Partido Democrático 30 de Noviembre "Frank País"*, Frank País 30th November Democratic Party, was arrested on 12 September 1997 in Havana and taken to the Fourth Police Unit. His mother was told the same day that he would be released on bail within three days if she paid 1,000 pesos, a large amount of money in Cuba. However, on 15 September she was told that it had been decided to bring him to trial next day at Cerro municipal court on a charge of "disrespect". He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment which he is believed to be serving in Unit 1580 (also known as "El Pitirre") in San Miguel del Padrón, Havana.

⁹ *idem*.

Dr Desi Mendoza Rivero¹⁰, president of the *Colegio Médico Independiente de Santiago de Cuba*, Santiago de Cuba Independent Medical Association, was detained on 25 June 1997 in Santiago de Cuba, after making statements, which were disseminated by foreign media, about 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 was brought to trial on 18 November 1997, charged with using the mass media to spread "enemy propaganda", and sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. He is serving his sentence in Boniato Prison, Santiago de Cuba province.

Cecilio Monteagudo Sánchez, a member of the unofficial *Partido Solidaridad Democrática*, Democratic Solidarity Party, in Camajuaní, Villa Clara province, was detained on 15 September 1997. He was due to be brought to trial on 25 November 1997, charged with "enemy propaganda" on the grounds that he wrote a leaflet calling on people not to vote in the local elections that were due to be held in October, but the hearing was adjourned. The prosecution are believed to be seeking a sentence of six years' imprisonment. He is believed to be held in La Pendiente Prison, Santa Clara, Villa Clara province. Also due to be tried in the same case is journalist Juan Carlos Recio Martínez (see below). As far as Amnesty International is aware, the trial has not yet taken place.

Lorenzo Páez Nuñez¹¹, president of the unofficial *Centro No Gubernamental para los Derechos Humanos "José de la Luz y Caballero"*, José de la Luz y Caballero Non-Governmental Centre for Human Rights, remains imprisoned at Guanajay Prison, Havana province. He was detained on 10 July 1997 in Artemisa, Havana, and tried the following day, together with Dagoberto Vega Jaime (see below). Both were charged with "disrespect" and "defamation" because of his attempts to disseminate to contacts in the USA information about allegations of human rights violations. Lorenzo Páez, who is also a correspondent for *Libertad*, Freedom, an independent press agency which is part of the *Buró de Periodistas Independientes de Cuba (BPIC)*, Bureau of Independent Cuban Journalists, was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment.

¹⁰ *idem.*

¹¹ *idem.*

Héctor Palacio Ruiz¹², president of the unofficial *Partido Solidaridad Democrático* (PSD), Democratic Solidarity Party, and member of the national coordinating council of *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium¹³, was arrested on 9 January 1997 following an interview with a German television station in which he criticised the Cuban Government and referred to declarations made by President Fidel Castro at the Sixth Ibero-American Summit in Chile in November 1996. On 4 September 1997 he was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for "disrespect" towards President Fidel Castro. He had been serving his sentence in Combinado del Este Prison, Havana, but on 29 December 1997 was transferred to Melena del Sur Prison in Havana province.

Vladimiro Roca Antunes¹⁴, a specialist in international economic relations and member of the *Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna para el Análisis de la Situación Socio-Económica Cubana*, Internal Dissidents' Working Group for the Analysis of the Cuban Socio-Economic Situation, was arrested on 16 July 1997, along with three other members of the group. All four are awaiting trial on charges which are believed to include "enemy propaganda". At the time of writing he is being held in Ariza Prison, Cienfuegos province, and is said to be suffering from high blood pressure.

Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina¹⁵ is president of the unofficial *Movimiento Cubano Jóvenes por la Democracia*, Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy. He was arrested on 8 April 1997 and brought to trial for "disrespect", and "resistance", after criticising the Fourteenth Youth and Student Festival that was to be held in Cuba later in July and August. He was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment which he is serving in Combinado de Guantánamo Prison. After going on hunger strike at the time of the youth festival, he was sent to a punishment cell. In September he was reportedly badly beaten by guards on two occasions and again sent to a punishment cell for an unknown period of time. He subsequently went on hunger strike again for a short period but

¹² See *Cuba: Prisoner of Conscience Héctor Palacio Ruiz sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment*, AMR 25/35/97, 2 October 1997, for further details.

¹³ *Concilio Cubano* is a forum of some 140 unofficial groups which was set up in October 1995. As a result of attempts to organize a national meeting in February 1996, scores of people were detained and several of the most prominent leaders imprisoned. 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, for further details.

¹⁴ See *Cuba: Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics*, AMR 25/29/97, August 1997, for further details.

¹⁵ *idem*. Also *Cuba: Ill-treatment of Three Political Prisoners in Combinado de Guantánamo Prison*, AMR 25/44/97, 8 December 1997.

appears to have since given up his protest. After not receiving any family visits for four months, he was permitted a one-hour visit from his father on 25 December 1997.

Orestes Rodríguez Urrutiner, acting president (*presidente interino*) of the unofficial *Movimiento Seguidores de Chivás*, Followers of Chivás Movement, in Santiago de Cuba, was arrested in June or July 1997. He was brought to trial on 11 November 1997 on a charge of "enemy propaganda" and sentenced to four years' imprisonment which he is serving in El Manguito Prison, Santiago de Cuba.

Efraín Rodríguez Santos, a member of the *Club Pueblos Cautivos de Cuba*, an unofficial group working for peasants who were evicted from their land during the 1960s, was arrested on 12 July 1997 at his home in a rural community called Ramón López Peña in San Cristóbal, Pinar del Río province, after reportedly shouting out from his balcony "¡Abajo Fidel!", "Down with Fidel", and other statements which were critical of the government. He was reportedly drunk at the time of the offence. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment on 24 September 1997, accused of "*desacato a la figura del Comandante Fidel Castro*", "disrespect to Commander Fidel Castro". The sentence was ratified on appeal in October 1997. His place of detention is not known.

Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello¹⁶, an economist and member of the *Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna para el Análisis de la Situación Socio-Económica Cubana*, Internal Dissidents' Working Group for the Analysis of the Cuban Socio-Economic Situation, was arrested on 16 July 1997, along with three other members of the group. All four are awaiting trial on charges which are believed to include "enemy propaganda". In December she was transferred from the *Centro de Reeducación de Mujeres de Occidente*, Womens' Reeducation Centre, Havana, to the Marianao Military Hospital, where she was reportedly being treated for breast lumps. It is not clear whether she is still in hospital at the time of writing.

Dagoberto Vega Jaime¹⁷, an activist of the unofficial *Centro No Gubernamental para los Derechos Humanos "José de la Luz y Caballero"*, José de la Luz y Caballero Non-Governmental Centre for Human Rights, is serving a one-year prison sentence in Guanajay Prison, Havana province. He was detained on 10 July 1997 in Artemisa, Havana, and tried the following day, together with Lorenzo Páez Núñez (see above). Both were charged with "disrespect" and "defamation" because of their attempts to disseminate to contacts in the USA information about allegations of human rights violations.

¹⁶ See *Cuba: Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics*, AMR 25/29/97, August 1997, for further details.

¹⁷ *idem*.

POSSIBLE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International is monitoring the following cases in order to determine whether those concerned are or may become prisoners of conscience:

Juan Escandell Ramírez is a lawyer who works for an independent lawyers' organization called the *Corriente Agramontista*, Agramontist Current. He has defended several dissidents, including prisoner of conscience Héctor Palacio Ruiz (see above), and is currently representing Félix Bonné Carcasés (see above). He has been threatened with imprisonment on several occasions in the past. After he had been briefly detained in February 1996 during the crackdown on *Concilio Cubano*¹⁸, he said that he had been told by State Security that they were intending to invent a case against him. In September 1997, he was accused of "*acoso sexual*", "sexual harassment" after a woman who had been visiting his office in San Antonio de los Baños went to the police. On 8 October 1997, he and his wife, Yanét Pico Camaraza, were summoned to the military counter-intelligence headquarters in Rancho Boyeros, Havana, and told that he was under investigation for having written an anonymous letter to an army major inciting him to take action against the government. On 20 October 1997, the couple were summoned to the headquarters of the *Departamento Técnico de Investigaciones (DIT)*, Technical Investigations Department, in Havana, where they were interviewed by two State Security officials. After one official referred to the alleged incident of sexual harassment, the other said that he was there because he wanted the couple to sign official warnings about statements they had been giving to foreign news media. In September, Yanét Pico Camaraza was briefly detained on suspicion of trafficking in marijuana but released without charge. Neither are in detention at the time of writing and so far no further action has been taken against them, though investigations of the alleged charges are believed to be continuing. Amnesty International believes that, on the basis of the information so far available, there is no credible evidence for the accusations against Juan Escandell Ramírez. It believes that he and his wife are being targeted because of his work in defence of political prisoners.

Alexander Hernández Lago was detained on 23 September 1997 when police went to his home in Pinar del Río, reportedly without a warrant, to arrest his mother because she had failed to pay a bill of 41.5 pesos for water and sewage supplies. Police reportedly forced their way into the house and beat both him and his mother. He then went into the street with a placard saying "*Ya estamos cansados de tanta arbitrariedad e injusticia, Derechos Humanos, Artículo 19, ¡Respétense!*", "We are fed up with so much arbitrariness and injustice, Human Rights, Article 19, Respect them!". He was then

¹⁸ See footnote 12.

handcuffed, reportedly beaten again, and taken, together with his mother, to Police Unit No. 1 in Pinar del Río. He was released on 100 pesos' bail two days later. He was due to be tried on 24 November 1997, accused of "disrespect" and "assault". The outcome of the trial is not yet known and it is not clear whether he is at present imprisoned. Alexander Hernández Lago is reportedly a contributor to *Vitral*, an officially-sanctioned religious magazine published by the *Centro de Información Cívico-Religioso*, Centre for Civic and Religious Information,

Maritza Lugo Fernández¹⁹, a member of the national executive of the unofficial *Partido Democrático 30 de Noviembre*, 30 November Democratic Party, was arrested on 15 August 1997. She was subsequently brought to trial on 5 September 1997 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, charged with "*cohecho*", "bribery", on the grounds that she bribed a prison guard to smuggle money and a tape recorder into Unit 1580 Prison (also known as "El Pitirre") for another political prisoner. Following her trial she was being held under house arrest in order to recuperate from a hunger strike carried out while awaiting trial in the Women's Re-education Centre in Havana. It is not clear whether she is currently in prison. Amnesty International believes that she may have been targeted because of her peaceful political activities. Her brother, prisoner of conscience **Osmel Lugo Gutiérrez**, who is vice-president of the same group and was arrested in May 1996, is serving a prison sentence of two years and six months for "disrespect". Both were reportedly summoned by immigration officials in May 1996 and offered the possibility of leaving the country even though they had not sought permission to do so.

Luis Mario Paredes Estrada, secretary of the unofficial *Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores Cubanos (CUT)*, Unitary Council of Cuban Workers, and a member of the *Partido Democrático 30 de Noviembre Frank País*, Frank País 30th November Democratic Party, in Manzanillo, Granma province, was arrested on 4 September 1997 and was going to be tried the next day for "dangerousness". However, after he went on hunger strike, the hearing was postponed and he was released until 8 September when the trial took place. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment. He is believed to be serving his sentence in Las Mangas Prison in Granma province. It is not clear what the precise basis for the charge was but, from the information so far available, Amnesty International believes that he may have been targeted because of his peaceful political activities.

Cecilio Ruiz Rivero, a member of the unofficial *Asociación de Lucha Frente a la Injusticia (ALFIN)*, Association for Struggle Against Injustice, was reportedly brought to trial on 24 September 1997 and convicted on charges with "disrespect", "assault" and "resistance". He is imprisoned in Quivicán Prison, Havana province, but the precise

¹⁹ *idem.*

length of his sentence is not clear. He had been arrested on 14 July 1997. He had served a previous sentence of three years' imprisonment for "enemy propaganda". Amnesty International is seeking further information about the reasons for his current conviction.

OTHER CASES OF CONCERN TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International believes that the following six PPDHC members, who were detained on 14 October 1997 together with prisoner of conscience Roxana Carpio Mata and others (see above) after they began fasting in protest at the arrest of Daula Carpio Mata, were arrested in order to prevent them from peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression. At the time of writing, most of them are not believed to be in detention. However, the organization believes that the charges against them should be dropped and that their sentences should be annulled.

José Antonio Alvarado Almeida. He was sentenced to 18 months' "correctional work with internment", confirmed on appeal, but has not started his sentence. On 22 November 1997, he was hospitalized and placed in intensive care after reportedly suffering a heart attack. On 3 December he was discharged from hospital to his home where he has continued his fast. He is said to have lost about 50 pounds [23kg] in weight. He was told to report to Villa Clara Provincial Prison on 23 December but is believed not to have done so. As of early January 1998, he was again reported to be hospitalized in an intensive care unit but was still continuing his fast.

Arélis Fleites Méndez, wife of former prisoner of conscience Israel Feliciano García²⁰. She was sentenced to 18 months' "restricted liberty" and a fine. She is no longer fasting.

María Felicia Mata Machado, the mother of prisoners of conscience Daula and Roxana Carpio Mata (see above). She was sentenced to 18 months' "restricted liberty" and a fine.

She is no longer fasting.

Lilián Meneses Martínez. She was sentenced to 18 months' "*trabajo correccional sin internamiento*", "correctional work without internment", confirmed on appeal, but has not started her sentence. She is said to be suffering from dizziness, dry lips and an abnormally rapid heart rate (*taquicardia*) as the result of her fast which she is continuing. She was told to report to a work centre on 23 December despite having been informed earlier by the director that there was no work for women there. In late December, she was reportedly hospitalized briefly but as of early January had returned home where she was continuing her fast.

²⁰ See footnote 4.

Ileana Peñalver Duque. She was sentenced to 18 months' "correctional work without internment", confirmed on appeal, but has not started her sentence. She is still fasting and is said to be suffering from memory and vision disturbance, loss of feeling in her legs and to have lost a lot of weight. She was told to report for work at the Ovideo Rivero Agricultural Production Centre on 17 December and warned that, if she continued to present medical certificates stating she was too ill to work, her sentence would be changed instead to one of imprisonment. In late December, she was reportedly hospitalized briefly but as of early January had returned home where she was continuing her fast.

Danilo Santos Méndez. He was sentenced to 18 months' "correctional work with internment", confirmed on appeal, but did not start it immediately. He continued his fast and was said to be suffering from abdominal pain and exhaustion and to have lost a lot of weight. However, as of early January 1998, he was believed to have ceased his fast. It is not clear whether he has now started his sentence.