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# amnesty international

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## CUBA

### Prisoner of Conscience - Héctor Palacio Ruiz

29 January 1997

AI INDEX: AMR 25/02/97

DISTR: SC/CO/GR

Amnesty International believes that **Héctor Palacio Ruiz** has been detained for the non-violent exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association and is calling for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.

**Héctor Palacio Ruiz**, president of the *Partido Solidaridad Democrático (PSD)*, Democratic Solidarity Party, and member of the national coordinating council of *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium, was arrested on 9 January 1997 and taken to the *Departamento Técnico de Investigaciones (DTI)*, Technical Investigations Department, in Havana, where he **is reportedly being held in a cell with no light or ventilation**. There has been no official statement of the reasons for his arrest but, according to unofficial sources, he **is to be tried in case no.18/97 on a** charge of "desacato", "disrespect" (article 142 of the Cuban Penal Code), for allegedly making statements to foreign journalists and in letters to foreign governments about declarations made by President Fidel Castro at the Sixth Ibero-American Summit in Chile in November 1996. It is not known when the trial will take place.

**Héctor Palacio** had previously been arrested on 15 February 1996 during a major crackdown on *Concilio Cubano*, but was released some hours later. On 16 February 1996 his home was searched by police and documents were confiscated. He was arrested later that day by State Security officials and was held in detention for four days before being released without charge (see *Cuba: Government Crackdown on Dissent*, AMR 25/14/96).

#### Background Information

The Cuban Government has been trying to prevent the peaceful activities of *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium, since its establishment in October 1995. *Concilio Cubano* is a broad coalition of unofficial groups, including human rights defenders, political groups and groups of lawyers, journalists, women, trades unionists, ecologists, young people, economists and others. Despite in many cases having requested official recognition, such groups have never been permitted to operate officially although they are not formally banned. As a result of their unofficial status, members of such groups have encountered problems for several years, including being harassed, detained, interrogated and threatened that they may face imprisonment if they do not stop their activities or leave the country. The action against them intensified in the ten days prior to 24 February 1996 when *Concilio Cubano* was planning to hold a national meeting. From 15 February 1996 dozens of people were rounded up and the meeting was eventually banned by the authorities. Most were released without charge within a matter of days but others were brought to trial and imprisoned, released to await trial or forced into exile. At least five members of *Concilio Cubano* remain imprisoned and are considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience. Several others, including independent journalists, have been forced into exile. There are fears that

another crackdown by the government may be about to take place as the first anniversary of the planned meeting of *Concilio Cubano*, on 24 February 1996, approaches.

*Please send faxes/express and airmail letters preferably in Spanish. If not, in English or your own language:*

- Expressing concern that Héctor Palacio Ruiz has been detained solely for the non-violent exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Héctor Palacio Ruiz, on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for his attempts to peacefully exercise his right to freedom of association and expression.
- Urging that all Cuban citizens be guaranteed their rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that the Cuban Government immediately cease to imprison, force into exile abroad or otherwise punish those who attempt to peacefully exercise such rights.

*Please send appeals to:*

**Head of State and Government**

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz  
 Presidente de los Consejos  
 de Estados y de Ministros  
 La Habana, Cuba

**Telex and Fax: via Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see below)**

**Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your Excellency**

**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**

**Telex: 511456 figse**

**Fax: + 53 7 - 333164**

**Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General**

**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**

**Telex: 511122 / 511464 / 512950**

**Fax: + 53 7 - 333 085 / - 335 261**

**Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**

This document is sent to CARRAN coordinators for action by groups (see CARRAN 04/96, Update 2, AMR 25/03/97). It is also being sent to sections for information only. Please check with the Caribbean Sub-Regional Team if sending appeals after 1 April 1997.

**KEYWORDS: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE1 / BANNING / PRISON CONDITIONS / REARREST / POLITICAL ACTIVISTS /**

