

PUBLIC

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Possible prisoner of conscience/ harassment/ intimidation

CUBA

Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia (m), aged 21, journalist, and his family

On 4 December, Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia, a journalist for the Cuban-based independent press agency *Jóvenes sin Censura* (Youth without Censorship), was reportedly arrested at his house in Havana by State Security personnel and National Police officers. He is being held at the police station located at 100 Street and Aldabó Street in Havana. Amnesty International is concerned that Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia may be a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in the course of his journalistic work.

According to reports, days before Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia's arrest, he, his family and several dissidents who were gathered at his house were subjected to so-called "acts of repudiation" ("*acto de repudio*"), demonstrations of government supporters outside the homes of dissidents and activists, which are often orchestrated by the authorities. Amnesty International believes that these "acts of repudiation" could amount to psychological torture. The "acts of repudiation" started on 29 November, when stones were thrown at Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia's house, the roof of his house was set on fire, and some of Ahmed's guests were detained for a few hours by Cuban authorities when they left his house. Stones were repeatedly thrown at Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia's house throughout the next two days, and one of his guests who had been detained on 29 November was detained again for few hours on 30 November.

On 15 September, Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia was reportedly arrested at a police station in Havana after requesting information about another dissident who had been arrested earlier. He was released on 17 September but police allegedly threatened that if he carried on with his journalistic activities he would be detained again.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Freedom of expression and association is heavily restricted in Cuba. All legal media outlets are under government control and independent media are banned. Independent journalists who attempt to beat this censorship by publishing articles outside Cuba face intimidation, harassment and imprisonment. Human rights defenders also face intimidation and politically motivated and arbitrary arrests. The laws used to arrest and imprison journalists, relating to defamation, national security and disturbing public order, severely limit the exercise of civil and political liberties.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the government to release Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia immediately and unconditionally, unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried according to international standards for fair trial;
- calling on the authorities to cease the harassment, intimidation and persecution of independent journalists who are exercising their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association;
- requesting that all independent journalists engaged in legitimate reporting and non-violent activities be permitted to carry out their work unhindered without fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Head of State and Government
Raul Castro Ruz
Presidente interino

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: + 53 7 8333085 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or + 1 2127791697 (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)

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

Fax: + 53 7 669 485 / 333 164

Salutation: Señor Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr Felipe Pérez Roque

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Calzada No. 360, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: + 53 7 8333 085

Email: cubaminrex@minrex.gov.cu

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Interior Minister

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior, Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: + 53 7 8301 566

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO: 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 16 January 2006.