

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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**UA 175/95 Arbitrary Arrest / Possible Prisoners
of Conscience**

14 July 1995

**CUBA Rafael SOLANO, director of *Havana Press*
Hector PERAZA, coordinator of *Havana Press*
and other independent journalists**

Amnesty International is concerned that at least two journalists may face imprisonment as prisoners of conscience as part of an apparent crackdown on the activities of independent journalists in Cuba. Rafael Solano, head of an unofficial press agency called *Havana Press*, his colleague, Hector Peraza, and four other journalists working with the same agency, were detained in Havana on 12 July 1995. Confirmation has been received of the subsequent release of five of the men after a few hours; it is not clear whether or not one of the six, Hector Peraza, the coordinator of *Havana Press*, is still being held.

Rafael Solano was detained by State Security officials on the morning of 12 July and taken to the 11th police station in San Miguel del Padrón, Havana, for questioning. The officials reportedly did not show him a signed arrest warrant as required by Cuban law. He was reportedly accused of writing "articles damaging to the system" for "subversive" radio stations and newspapers abroad and told that an official investigation had been started against him on a charge of spreading "enemy propaganda", for which he could face between one and eight years' imprisonment. He was also accused of inciting people to participate in a protest planned to take place on 13 July (see background below). He was taken home some 11 hours later and told not to leave his home. The next morning, two State Security officials returned to his house and took him back to the police station where an official warning ("*acta de advertencia*") was issued against him. He had not yet been able to appoint a lawyer on his behalf and refused to sign a statement drawn up by the authorities. He was told that if he continued to give information to foreign media, he would be brought to trial for spreading "enemy propaganda". They said they would be monitoring short-wave radio broadcasts to see whether he continued with his activities.

Hector Peraza, and three other journalists, correspondents for *Havana Press*, were also detained on 12 July after searches of their homes. A fax machine, video camera and other photographic equipment, the personal property of one of the men, were removed from his home. So far it appears that no charges are to be brought against the latter three, but it has not yet been possible to clarify the situation of Hector Peraza.

On the same day, State Security police also detained Nestor Baguer, the president of the unofficial *Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba* (APIC), Independent Cuban Press Agency, after a raid on his home and removed a fax machine and some documents. His telephone has since been cut off. Amnesty International is not aware of any charges that have been brought against him.

On the basis of the information so far available, Amnesty International believes that, if they are imprisoned, Rafael Solano and Hector Peraza would be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

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 - their requests usually go unanswered. In recent months, however, there had been signs that the authorities were intending to take a more tolerant line towards at least some of these independent groups. Nevertheless, over the past two or three weeks a number of activists from different groups have been detained for short periods and warned against organizing any kind of anniversary protest or commemoration in connection with an incident that took place on 13 July 1994 in which some 40 people, including women and children, drowned when the tugboat in which they were trying to flee Cuba was attacked and sunk by other vessels, apparently under official orders.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Rafael Solano and Hector Peraza were arrested in connection with their work for *Havana Press* and that Rafael Solano may face a charge of spreading "enemy propaganda";
- requesting that any charges brought against Rafael Solano, and other members of *Havana Press* and *APIC*, in connection with their attempts to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression, be dropped;
- urging that Rafael Solano, Hector Peraza, Nestor Baguer and other freelance journalists be permitted to carry out their legitimate journalistic activities without such interference from the authorities.

APPEALS TO:

1) 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 fidge

Faxes: + 53 7 333164

Salutation: Señor Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

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 335261
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Department of State Security

Sr Director

Departamento de Seguridad del Estado

Villa Marista

La Víbora

La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Director, Villa Marista, Havana, Cuba

Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Cuban Journalists' Union (official body)

Unión de Periodistas de Cuba

Calle 23 No. 452

Apdo 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 25 August 1995.