

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 25/25/91

Distr: UA/SC

UA 416/91

Prisoners of Conscience/Legal Concern

27 November 1991

CUBA

María Elena CRUZ VARELA  
Fernando VELASQUEZ MEDINA  
Pastor HERRERA  
Jorge POMAR  
Gabriel AGUADO CHAVEZ  
Elvira BARO  
Húbert Luís MATOS SANCHEZ  
Eliécer AGUIAR

---

Amnesty International has learnt with concern of the detention of the above eight people between 19 and 24 November 1991 and believes that they are prisoners of conscience. All eight people are members of the unofficial opposition group *Criterio Alternativo*, Alternative View.

At 5pm on 19 November 1991 the first of a recent series of incidents which have become known as *actos de repudio*, "acts of repudiation by the masses" took place outside the home of María Elena Cruz Varela, the president of *Criterio Alternativo*. During an *acto de repudio*, political dissidents and human rights activists are subjected to verbal and physical abuse by groups of people chanting pro-government slogans. Local human rights activists and others believe these incidents are orchestrated by Cuba's security services to intimidate any opposition. On this occasion an estimated 300 people arrived in official transport at María Elena Cruz Varela's home in the Alamar district of Havana. Eye-witnesses report that some of the crowd were armed and carried walkie-talkies. Entry was forced into María Elena Cruz Varela's home and those inside, including her young daughter and Gladys González Noy, vice-president of the unofficial group *Asociación Pro-Arte Libre*, Free Art Association, were reportedly physically attacked and injured by members of the crowd who were shouting abuse at them. María Elena Cruz Varela, her daughter and Gladys González Noy were taken to a local police station, *Unidad Policial de Alamar*, where they were held for nearly six hours before being released. The *acto de repudio* outside María Elena Cruz Varela's home continued and she was reportedly detained again on 21 November 1991, together with Fernando Velasquez Medina, Pastor Herrera and Jorge Pomar (whom sources say was hurt). They were reportedly taken to the headquarters of the State Security police, known as *Villa Marista*, where they are currently believed to be held in incommunicado detention.

Between 20 and 24 November 1991, similar *actos de repudio*, some resulting in injuries, are reported to have taken place at the homes of other members of *Criterio Alternativo* resulting in the detention of Gabriel Aguado Chavez, Elvira Baró, Húbert Luís Matos Sánchez and Eliécer Aguiar.

On 20 November 1991 human rights activist Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz,

was detained when he attempted to reach María Elena Cruz Varela's house and held for a short time at the *Unidad Policial de Alamar*. At 6pm on 22 November 1991 agents of the police reportedly arrived at his home and, after carrying out a thorough search, detained Elizardo Sánchez and his brother Gerardo, also a human rights activist. Their elderly mother reports that these events took place in the presence of a foreign diplomat who was visiting the brothers at the time. Shortly after their arrest, a crowd of approximately 200 people arrived in official transport, with walkie-talkies. The crowd threw dozens of eggs at the apartment and shouted insults. Elizardo and Gerardo Sánchez were returned to their home at about 10pm. The police reportedly forced them to pass through the hostile crowd, who verbally and physically attacked them. For some time after, no one was allowed to leave or enter the house and the telephone was disconnected.

This series of incidents followed a meeting which took place on 18 November 1991 between María Elena Cruz Varela, Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, two other dissidents and Juan Luís Rodríguez Vigil, president of the Spanish region of Asturias, who was on an official visit to Cuba.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In recent months, against a background of growing economic difficulties, the Cuban authorities have increasingly clamped down on signs of dissent. In June, the authorities set up *Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida*, Rapid Response Brigades, for which civilians were asked to volunteer and which appear to be under specific instructions to crack down on any signs of unrest or dissidence. Several reports have been received of known dissidents, including human rights activists, being verbally and physically attacked in the street by crowds believed to be part of these "Rapid Response Brigades" and in some cases being detained for short periods before being released with warnings not to continue their "counter-revolutionary activities".

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes and airmail letters:**

- urging the immediate and unconditional release of María Elena Cruz Varela, Fernando Velasquez Medina, Pastor Herrera, Jorge Pomar, Gabriel Aguado Chávez, Elvira Baró, Húbert Luís Matos Sanchez and Eliécer Aguiar on the grounds that they are prisoners of conscience detained for peacefully trying to express their views;
- requesting that they be humanely treated while in detention and allowed full access to family and lawyers;
- requesting that all independent human rights monitors and non-violent political dissidents be permitted to carry out their legitimate activities unhindered.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

- 1) President:

Su Excelencia **Su Excelencia / Your Excellency**  
 Dr Fidel Castro Ruz  
 Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros  
 Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba  
**Telegrams: Presidente Castro, Havana, Cuba**  
**Telexes: 51212 P DESP PRESID**

2) Minister of the Interior:  
 General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra **Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**  
 Ministro del Interior  
 Ministerio del Interior  
 Plaza de la Revolución  
 Ciudad de La Habana, Cuba  
**Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba**  
**Telexes: 511122 / 511464 MINREX HAB marked "please forward to the  
 Minister of Interior"**

3) Attorney General:  
 Dr Ramón de la Cruz Ochoa **Señor Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General**

Fiscal General de la República  
 Fiscalía General de la República  
 San Rafael 3  
 Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba  
**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba**  
**Telexes: 511456 FISGE**

4) Head of Department of State Security:  
 Jefe del Cuartel General de **Señor Jefe / Dear Sir**  
 Seguridad del Estado (DSE)  
 Villa Marista  
 Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba  
**Telegrams: Jefe Seguridad del Estado, Havana, Cuba**

5) Minister of Justice:  
 Dr Carlos Amat Forés **Señor Ministro / Dear Minister**  
 Ministro de Justicia  
 Ministerio de Justicia  
 Calle O No. 216, 8vo piso  
 e/23 y Humboldt, Vedado  
 Ciudad de la Habana 4, Cuba  
**Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Havana, Cuba**  
**Telexes: 511331 MINJU CU**

**COPIES TO:**

Information Bureau of Human Rights Movement in Cuba  
 3901 SW 109 Ave, Apt B10  
 Miami, FL 33165, USA

and to diplomatic representatives of Cuba in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
 or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 January 1992.