

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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This is a limited action - please send up to twenty appeals per section

UA 354/92 Prisoner of Conscience/Health Concern/
Fear of Ill-treatment/Hunger Strike

12 November 1992

CUBA: Luis Alberto PITA SANTOS, prisoner of conscience
Arturo SUAREZ RAMOS, political prisoner
Jorge KERR MITCHELL, political prisoner

Amnesty International is concerned about the state of health of three political prisoners, one of whom is a prisoner of conscience. According to reports, Luis Alberto Pita Santos and Arturo Suárez Ramos, both of whom are currently being held in Boniato Prison in Santiago de Cuba, are in poor health as a result of having been on hunger strike. It is also alleged that both have been beaten by prison guards because of their protest although the precise circumstances of such beatings are not yet known. It is not clear why the two have been on hunger strike but it is thought that they may have at least in part been protesting their recent transfer from prisons near Havana, from where both come, to Boniato Prison, almost 1,000 kilometres from their families.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the situation of Jorge Kerr Mitchell who is currently held in Pinar del Río Provincial Prison, commonly known as "Kilo 5½". He has reportedly undertaken several hunger strikes in an attempt to be transferred back to Combinado del Este Prison in Havana where he was originally held. As a result of the hunger strikes, he is said to have lost movement in both his legs.

It is not clear what medical attention, if any, these three prisoners have received.

Luis Alberto Pita Santos is President of the unofficial Asociación Defensora de los Derechos Políticos (ADDEPO), Association for the Defence of Political Rights.

He was arrested on 9 October 1991. He was brought to trial in April 1992 on charges of *desacato*, disrespect, *asociación ilícita*, illegal association, and *clandestinidad de impresos*, clandestine printing, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely on account of his peaceful and legitimate political activities.

Arturo Suárez Ramos is serving a 30-year sentence for his participation in an attempt to hi-jack a Cuban Airlines plane in 1987 in which several passengers were injured by hand grenades. He was originally condemned to death but had his sentence commuted on appeal.

Little information is known about Jorge Kerr Mitchell. He is believed to be about 25 years old and to have been arrested in 1990 accused of sabotage. His sentence is not known.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has consistently received reports that some prison guards regularly use excessive violence against prisoners. While in some instances the prisoners may themselves have behaved violently, many reports suggest that the attacks by guards are unprovoked and that in some cases the detainee is beaten while handcuffed or tied up. Such treatment is tantamount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and, in some isolated cases, torture. For example, in January 1991, three political prisoners who were on hunger strike were reportedly held for more than seventeen days with their arms outstretched and chained to the iron bars of their cells. Two of them were beaten at least three times while in chains. Political prisoners in Cuba frequently undertake hunger strikes, often also refusing to wear their prison uniform, to protest about their treatment or to make their political views known. While Amnesty International takes no position on hunger strikes as such, the organization believes that in some cases the Cuban authorities have taken unacceptable measures to force those on hunger strike to give up their protests, including withholding drinking water and medical attention.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Luis Alberto Pita Santos and Arturo Suárez Ramos are in poor health in Boniato Prison, both as the result of having undertaken hunger strikes and from beatings by prison guards;
- urging that a thorough investigation be carried out into the reports of ill-treatment and those responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing concern at reports that Jorge Kerr Mitchell, currently held in Kilo 5½ Prison, has lost movement in both legs as the result of hunger strikes;
- urging that all three immediately be given all necessary medical attention and be permitted visits from their relatives;
- urging the immediate and unconditional release of Luis Alberto Pita Santos on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely because of his non-violent political beliefs.

APPEALS TO

For all three prisoners:

1) Attorney General:

Dr Ramón de la Cruz Ochoa
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

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

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511456 fidge

2) Minister of the Interior:

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Plaza de la Revolución
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

**Salutation: Señor Ministro /
Dear Minister**

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950 [Ministry of Foreign Affairs - asking them to pass the message on to the Minister of the Interior]

For Luis Alberto Pita Santos and Arturo Suarez Ramos only:

3) Director of Boniato Prison:

Señor Director
Prisión de Boniato
Apartado 5007
Puerto Boniato
Santiago de Cuba, Cuba

**Salutation: Señor Director /
Dear Sir**

Telegrams: Director, Prisión Boniato, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba

For Jorge Kerr Mitchell only:

4) Director of Kilo 5½ Prison:

Mayor Eumelio González Rodríguez
Director

**Salutation: Señor Director /
Dear Sir**

Prisión Provincial de Pinar del Río
Carretera de Pinar del Río a Luis Lazo
Pinar del Río, Cuba

Telegrams: Director, Prisión Kilo 5½, Pinar del Río, Cuba

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Newspaper:

Granma

Apartado 6260

Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

Information Bureau of Human Rights
Movement in Cuba
807 S.W. 25th Ave., Suite 210
Miami FL 33135, USA

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 23 December 1992.