

URGENT ACTION

CIVIC GROUP MEMBERS DETAINED AND HARASSED

At least six members of a coalition of Cuban civil society organizations have been detained to prevent them from taking part in events to mark the anniversary of the coalition's foundation. Two are still in detention.

The sixth anniversary of the Eastern Democratic Alliance (Alianza Democrática Oriental) was on 16 February and its members were due to meet in the town of Antilla, in eastern Cuba, to celebrate the day. But on 15 and 16 February, **Rolando Rodríguez Lobaina, José Cano Fuentes, Christian Toranzo, Mildred Infante, Miguel Ángel Vega Batista and Roland Ruz Rojas** were all detained in their homes by State Security.

On 15 February, Jose Cano Fuentes and Rolando Rodriguez Lobaina, who is also the General Co-ordinator of the Eastern Democratic Alliance, were detained in their houses in the province of Guantánamo. They were supposed to travel on that day from Guantánamo to Antilla to take part in the celebration. They were taken to a police station, where they remain in custody and have not been charged.

Christian Toranzo and Mildred Infante were also detained on 15 February, at their homes in Antilla. They were taken to a police station and were released after a few hours. They were told that if they left their houses to take part in activities with their organization, they would be charged with "*desacato*" ("disrespect"), under which they could be sentenced to one to three years' imprisonment. The next day, Miguel Angel Vega Batista and Roland Ruz Rojas were detained at their homes in Antilla and were also taken to a police station and released after an hour without charges.

At least six additional members of the Alliance in different provinces have reported that State Security visited their houses on 15 and 16 of February. In most cases, the activists had already left their houses on their way to Antilla, but the State Security officials threatened relatives in their homes. They told them that anyone taking part in commemoration activities could be detained and face charges.

The Eastern Democratic Alliance is a platform of civic organizations from Cuba's five eastern provinces. Within the Alliance there is a Human Right Secretariat which documents human rights violations in the eastern provinces.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the government to release Rolando Rodriguez Lobaina and Jose Cano Fuentes immediately and unconditionally, unless they are to be charged with an internationally recognized criminal offence and tried according to international standards for fair trial;
- calling on the authorities to cease the harassment, intimidation and persecution of citizens who seek to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MARCH 2010 TO:

Head of State and Government

Raúl Castro Ruz Presidente

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 8333085 (via Foreign

Ministry); +1 2127791697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

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

Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your

Excellency

Interior Minister

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior, Plaza de la

Revolución, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 8333085 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

+1 2127791697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your

Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Freedom of assembly, association and expression in Cuba continues to be severely restricted and many arrests have taken place around commemorations of past events and demonstrations. The detentions last usually for few hours after which the detainee is released with a warning to not to take part in any dissenting activities or face charges. Short term detention is commonly used by Cuban authorities as a method to intimidate and prevent citizens from the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

On 3 February, at least 23 people were detained in Camaguey while they were taking part in a demonstration calling for the release of the prisoner of conscience Orlando Zapata Tamayo. According to the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CCDHRN)), a national human rights organization, they were also beaten by the state officials who arrested them. Among the detainees was Rolando Jimenez Lobaina, General Co-ordinator of Eastern Democratic Alliance. Orlando Zapata Tamayo is on a hunger strike to demand better prison conditions and he is believed to be very unwell.

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