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Cuba: New wave of political oppression

Amnesty International has today sent a letter to the Cuban authorities expressing its concerns at the recent serious escalation in the arrests and harassment of political opponents in Cuba.

"The increasing number of people jailed for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, clearly demonstrates the level to which the government will go in order to weaken the political opposition and suppress dissidents," Amnesty International said today.

In its letter to the Cuban authorities, Amnesty International has requested information about the legal situation of 14 individuals who were detained in the context of the recent escalation. Amnesty International believes that some or all of those listed in its letter could be "prisoners of conscience".

The current wave of oppression began in October 2000 with the mass arrests and convictions of those engaged in 'counter-revolutionary' activities, such as trade union activists. The harassment intensified in December, around the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, during which Angel Moya Acosta and Julia Cecilia Delgado were arrested and subsequently sentenced to a year in prison for "disrespect". Amnesty International calls for their immediate and unconditional release as "prisoners of conscience".

Background

Angel Moya Acosta is a former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience and member of the illegal Movimiento Opción Alternativa, Alternative Option Movement. He was detained in December 1999 after participating in a peaceful demonstration in Pedro Betancourt village,

Matanzas province, to celebrate the 51st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although he was charged, no trial or sentencing ever took place. He was released in August 2000.

Julia Cecilia Delgado, president of the illegal Asociación de Reconciliación y Recuperación de los Valores Humanos, Association for Reconciliation and the Recovery of Human Values, was detained after participating in a peaceful march on 4 December 2000.

Currently, several hundred people, 16 of whom have been identified by Amnesty International as "prisoners of conscience" detained for peaceful exercise of the freedom of expression, association or assembly, are imprisoned for political offences in Cuba. In addition to these "prisoners of conscience", Amnesty International continues to be concerned at the severe harassment to which dissidents, including journalists, members of political organizations and human rights advocates, are subjected.

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For a list of the individuals named in the letter or more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
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