

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 22/92 Possible Prisoners of Conscience/
Medical Concern/ Legal Concern

16 January 1992

CUBA: Bienvenida CUCALO SANTANA (f), Secretary General of the
Movimiento Feminino Humanitario Cubano, Cuban Women's
Humanitarian Movement

Joel DUEÑAS, aged 21) members of the
Arturo GARNICA TORRES, aged 27) above movement

Amnesty International has been informed of the arrest of Bienvenida Cúcalo Santana, the Secretary General of the unofficial Movimiento Feminino Humanitario Cubano, Cuban Humanitarian Women's Movement, and two other members of the same group. All three were arrested in Havana on or about 31 December 1991 following searches of their homes. Little information is so far known about the reasons for their arrests but one report indicates that Joel Dueñas is accused of illegal association (asociación ilícita) and enemy propaganda (propaganda enemiga). He is reportedly being held at the 10th police unit in Avenida de Acosta. Amnesty International is particularly concerned about his state of health: he is said to suffer from chronic epilepsy and to have had 21 attacks in one day while in custody. He is also said to be suffering from high blood pressure (grave hipertensión arterial) and diabetes. Arturo Garnica Torres is thought to be held at the same police station but Bienvenida Cúcalo Santana is believed to be at the headquarters of the Departamento de Seguridad del Estado (DSE), Department of State Security, at Villa Marista. It is unlikely that any of them will have had access to lawyers.

Amnesty International believes that all three are probably prisoners of conscience detained solely on account of their peaceful activities on behalf of the Movimiento Feminino Humanitario Cubano. This group was set up in 1991 and has been providing assistance to the relatives of political prisoners. It does not have official recognition (such groups have to apply for registration from the Ministry of Justice). It is part of a coalition of political and human rights groups called the Concertación Democrática Cubana, Cuban Democratic Convergence, five of whose leaders have been arrested in the past few weeks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Cuban authorities have increasingly clamped down on signs of dissent over recent months. On 31 December 1991, a senior Cuban official said that they would not hesitate to act against "counter-revolutionary activities" and did not intend to change their policy of detaining, prosecuting and jailing opponents. In June 1991, they set up Destacamentos Populares de Respuesta Rápida, People's Rapid Response Detachments, also known as brigades (brigadas), for which civilians were asked to volunteer. They are under specific instructions to crack down on any signs of unrest or dissent.

Several incidents have occurred recently in which known dissidents, including human rights activists, have been verbally and physically attacked by such groups. In some cases, those under attack have been arrested and brought to trial and are now serving prison sentences following conviction on charges such as illegal association (asociación ilícita), clandestine printing (clandestinidad de impresos) and defamation (difamación). Trials on such charges often take place within days of arrest and access to defence lawyers is non-existent or extremely limited. If more serious charges such as enemy propaganda (propaganda enemiga) or other crimes against state security are brought, the detainee is often held under investigation for several months without access to lawyers.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/airmail letters:

- urging that all three be immediately and unconditionally released unless charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- requesting that they be humanely treated while in detention and in particular that Joel Dueñas be granted all necessary medical treatment;
- requesting that they be allowed full access to family and lawyers.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz **Su Excelencia / Your Excellency**
Presidente del Consejo de Estado y del Consejo 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

3) Head of the 10th Police Unit in Avenida de Acosta:

Señor Director de la 10a Unidad de la PNR **Señor Director / Dear Sir**
Avenida de Acosta
Municipio 10 de octubre
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Director 10a Unidad de la PNR, Havana, Cuba

4) Head of Investigations at the Department of State Security:

Coronel Adalberto Rabeiro García **Señor Coronel / Dear Sir**
Jefe de Investigaciones
Departamento de Seguridad del Estado
Villa Marista
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba
Telegrams: Coronel Rabeiro, Villa Marista, Havana, Cuba

5) 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

COPIES TO:

Information Bureau of the Human Rights Movement in Cuba
3901 S.W. 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 27 February 1992.