

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 104/94 Fear for safety

15 March 1994

CUBA: Francisco Chaviano González, President of the unofficial *Consejo Nacional por los Derechos Civiles en Cuba*, National Council for Civil Rights in Cuba

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Francisco Chaviano González after four men, driving a white Lada car and armed with semi-automatic pistols, broke into his home in Jaimanitas, Havana, on 7 March 1994 and physically attacked and threatened him. The nature of the assault and the history of harassment against Francisco Chaviano and the National Council for Civil Rights in Cuba, a non-violent human rights monitoring group, suggest there may have been official involvement.

There were several witnesses to the attack, but the assailants, who described themselves as "terrorists", said they could act with impunity because they had "bought" the cooperation of the police. They reportedly implied that their actions were aimed at persuading government opponents and dissidents to leave the country. They left taking with them a motorcycle used by the human rights group. Francisco Chaviano reported the incident to the police but so far this is said only to have resulted in the intimidation of witnesses to the attack.

The activities of the National Council for Civil Rights in Cuba, which include trying to document cases of Cubans who have gone missing at sea while trying to leave Cuba, are closely monitored by the security forces, and its members have been harassed and threatened several times in the past. In July 1992, a so-called "act of repudiation" was carried out against Francisco Chaviano at his home after he had been briefly detained for writing slogans in his own defence after Communist Party activists had written slogans insulting him opposite his home. A crowd of some 150 government supporters assembled at his home and shouted personal insults against him and his family.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over the past three years, members of unofficial political and human rights groups have regularly been subjected to intimidation. This seems to be an attempt to force them to give up their legitimate peaceful activities and in some cases to put pressure on them to leave the country. In 1991, representatives of several Communist Party organizations agreed at a meeting with President Fidel Castro to set up *Destacamentos Populares de Respuesta Rápida*, People's Rapid Response Detachments, popularly known as *Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida*, Rapid Response Brigades, "to defend the country, the Revolution and socialism in all circumstances, by confronting and liquidating any sign of counter-revolution or crimes" wherever it might appear and by whatever means necessary. Numerous reports of incidents of intimidation and harassment involving the alleged participation of such brigades have been reported since then, frequently including physical assault. In February 1994 a crowd of some 30 government supporters forced their way into the home of Eugenio Rodríguez Chaple, president of the unofficial Frente Cívico Democrático, Democratic Civic Front, physically attacked his wife and smashed up all the family's belongings. The police reportedly refused to take action against those responsible. In January 1994 Elizardo Sánchez Santa Cruz, the president of the unofficial *Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional*, Cuban Commission of Human Rights and National Reconciliation,

reported several incidents of harassment of moderate dissidents over a two-week period, including the beating up of the group's spokesman, René del Pozo, in what was described as a "carefully planned attack" as he was cycling through Havana.

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

- urging an immediate investigation into the attack on Francisco Chaviano González that took place on 7 March 1994 and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- requesting that the authorities take immediate steps to protect Francisco Chaviano González and his family from further incidents of this nature;
- requesting that all members of unofficial political and human rights groups be permitted to carry out their legitimate activities in peace.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz
 Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros
 La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Presidente Castro, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261 [These telex and fax numbers are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - please ask them to forward your message to the President]

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear President

2) Attorney General:

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera
 Fiscal General de la República
 Fiscalía General de la República
 San Rafael 3, La Habana, Cuba

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511456 fisge

Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

3) Minister of the Interior:

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

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Havana, Cuba

Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950

Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261

[These telex and fax numbers are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - please ask them to forward your message to General Colomé]

Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

4) Minister of Justice:

Dr Carlos Amat Forés
 Ministro de Justicia
 Ministerio de Justicia
 Calle 0 # 216, 8° piso
 e/ 23 y Humboldt, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba

Telexes: 511331

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Havana, Cuba
Salutation: Sr Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:
Sr Roberto Robaina González
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calzada No. 360, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba
Faxes: + 53 7 333085 / + 53 7 335261

Newspaper:
Granma, Apartado 6260, Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba

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 26 April 1994.