

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 25/013/2003

EXTRA 21/03

Death penalty / imminent execution

14 April 2003

CUBA

At least 52 people on death row

Executed:

Lorenzo Enrique Copello Castillo (m)
Bárbaro Leodán Sevilla García (m)
Jorge Luis Martínez Isaac (m)

Amnesty International is concerned that at least 52 people on death row may be imminently executed, following the execution of Lorenzo Enrique Copello Castillo, Bárbaro Leodán Sevilla García and Jorge Luis Martínez Isaac on 11 April. The executions marked the end of a *de facto* moratorium practiced by the Cuban authorities since April 2000.

On 11 April, Lorenzo Enrique Copello Castillo, Bárbaro Leodán Sevilla García and Jorge Luis Martínez Isaac, were executed by firing squad in Cuba. The men had reportedly hijacked a Cuban ferry on 2 April and tried to force it to take them to the United States. When the ferry ran out of fuel off the coast of Cuba, the men allegedly threatened the lives of passengers. The ferry was escorted back to harbour in Cuba, and after a standoff of several days, the incident was resolved without violence.

The three men were part of a group of eleven accused of participating in the hijacking. They were convicted under toughened anti-terrorism legislation passed in December 2001 which allowed for the use of the death penalty in extreme cases. Their appeals to the Supreme Court and the Council of State were summarily dismissed, and the three were executed by firing squad less than a week after their trial began. The others accused received less severe sentences.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern at the resumption of executions following Cuba's three-year *de facto* moratorium on executions;
- acknowledging that those on death row were often convicted of heinous crimes, and expressing sympathy for the victims= families and friends, but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments;
- reminding the Cuban authorities that international due process guarantees must be fully respected at all times;
- expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment;
- urging President Castro and the Cuban authorities to commute these and all other pending death sentences, and not to pass any further death sentences.

APPEALS TO:

(Please note fax numbers to Cuba can be unreliable. If you have difficulties, please communicate via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs):

President

Su Excelencia

Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz

Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros

La Habana, Cuba

Telegram: President Castro, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 333085 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Su Excelencia/ Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Felipe Pérez Roque

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Calzada No. 360

Vedado

La Habana, Cuba

Telegram: Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 333085

E-mail: cubaminrex@minrex.gov.cu

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

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

Telex: 511456 fisge

Fax: +53 7 8669 485 / 53 7 33 3164

Salutation: Sr Fiscal General/ Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

National Union of Jurists

Sr. Arnal Medina Cuenca

Presidente

Unión Nacional de Juristas de Cuba

Calle 21, No. 552, esq. D

Apartado 4161

La Habana 4, Cuba

Newspaper

Sr. Jacinto Granda de Laserna

Director, *Diario Granma*

Apdo 6260

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 May 2003.