

URGENT ACTION

DOZENS OF CUBAN OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS DETAINED

Members of the Ladies in White have been detained in Havana and several other places in Cuba. Some remain in detention and the authorities have failed to provide reasons for their detention or information on their whereabouts.

From 21 to 24 September the Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) held several activities, including masses and marches in Havana, to celebrate the feast day of Our Lady of Mercy (*Virgin de la Merced*) and in memory of former political activists. Since 20 September, various members of the Ladies in White have received intimidating notes aimed at preventing them from taking part in activities. Reports from the group state that the headquarters in Neptuno Street, Havana have been surrounded by police officers.

Around 50 members of the group, who travelled from different provinces of Cuba to attend the activities, were arrested on their way to Havana. The majority of them were released and deported back to their provinces, however 19 remain detained and their whereabouts are unknown. On 24 September as the Ladies in White planned to attend mass, an act of repudiation (*acto de repudio* see background information) took place at their headquarters. Government supporters and state agents gathered in the street chanting pro-government slogans and intimidating the women. In the early morning of 25 September 18 members of the Ladies in White were arrested at the headquarters.

Amnesty International believes that the repeated use of short term detentions of members of the Ladies in White and other activists in Cuba is a tactic used to silence dissident voices in the country and prevent peaceful activities. Furthermore the systematic arrest of activists travelling from the provinces to Havana represents an excessive limitation to freedom of movement and represents excessive control and harassments of dissidents.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to reveal immediately the identity and whereabouts of all members of the Ladies in White arrested between 21-25 September;
- Urging them to immediately release the detained members, unless there is sufficient evidence to charge them with an internationally recognizable criminal offence;
- Urging them to immediately cease the harassment and intimidation of members of the Ladies in White and all other citizens who seek to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association, and immediately stop arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement of Cubans inside Cuba.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 NOVEMBER 2012 TO:

President

Raúl Castro Ruz
 Presidente de la República de Cuba
 La Habana,
 Cuba
 Fax: +53 7 83 33 085 (via Foreign
 Ministry); +1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban
 Mission to UN)
 Email: cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission
 to UN)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Interior Minister

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra
 Ministro del Interior y Prisiones
 Ministerio del Interior,
 Plaza de la Revolución,
 La Habana, Cuba
 Fax: +537 85 56 621; +1 212 779 1697
 (via Cuban Mission to UN)
 Email: correominint@mn.mn.co.cu
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Attorney General

Dr Darío Delgado Cura
 Fiscal General de la República,
 Fiscalía General de la República,
 Amistad 552, e/Monte y Estrella, Centro
 Habana, La Habana, Cuba
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

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

Acts of repudiation (actos de repudio) are government coordinated demonstrations, usually carried out in front of the homes of political opponents, attended by government supporters, state officials and law enforcement agencies aimed at harassing and intimidating opponents and are often used to prevent them from travelling to participate in activities. During an act of repudiation, political opponents and human rights activists are subjected to verbal and physical abuse by groups of people chanting pro-government slogans. Police are usually present but fail to intervene to stop the assaults. Such incidents frequently involve the Rapid Response Brigades (Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida), a structure set up in 1991 and composed of Communist Party volunteers whose task is to deal with any sign of 'counter-revolution'.

Local human rights activists and others believe these incidents are orchestrated by Cuba's security services to intimidate any opposition.

The Ladies in White was formed by a group of female relatives of the 75 prisoners of conscience who were imprisoned in March 2003 for their peaceful expression of critical opinions of the government. The group would attend mass every Sunday in the capital, Havana, dressed in white, to pray for the release of their relatives. Afterwards they would take part in a procession from the church to a nearby park, carrying white flowers.

A solidarity group called the Ladies in Support (Damas de Apoyo) subsequently emerged to support and participate in activities organized by the Ladies in White. In early 2012 the two groups merged and all members are now considered to be Ladies in White. After the release of all the prisoners of conscience from the March 2003 crackdown, the Ladies in White have been campaigning for the release of political prisoners and for the lifting of restrictions on fundamental civil and political freedoms in Cuba.

The Ladies in White have repeatedly suffered harassment and intimidation as they have attempted to carry out their peaceful activities. They are frequently subject to acts of repudiation by government supporters and members of the security forces, and also to short-term arbitrary detentions in order to disrupt their activities.

Name: Members of The Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) and other opposition activists in Cuba

Gender m/f: both

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