

# CUBA

## Renewed Crackdown on Peaceful Government Critics

Amnesty International is concerned at renewed and intensified action by the Cuban authorities to stifle peaceful political dissent in the country in the run-up to the Fifth Congress of the *Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC)*, Cuban Communist Party - the only political party permitted in Cuba - to be held in October this year. In the same month, elections for municipal delegates to the *Asamblea Nacional de Poder Popular (ANPP)*, National Assembly of Popular Power, will also be held. Since the end of April 1997, the organization has received reports of some 100 short-term detentions of members of different unofficial organizations, including independent press agencies, who have been attempting to peacefully challenge official positions in many different spheres, including politics and human rights<sup>1</sup>. Since April, at least eight people have been brought to trial and sentenced to prison. Some 28 others are believed to be facing possible trial. While some have been charged with offences which are overtly political in nature, others have been charged with offences which are believed to have been fabricated or unfairly brought against them as a punishment for their political views. Many other activists have been threatened with imprisonment if they do not give up their activities or leave the country. At least two journalists have succumbed to such threats and left Cuba. In some cases, those concerned have been subjected to other forms of intimidation, such as physical attacks by individuals believed to be working for the *Departamento de Seguridad del Estado (DSE)*, Department of State Security, anonymous telephone threats, loss of employment or threats against other members of their families. Others have been subjected to “*actos de repudio*”, “acts of repudiation”. These are meetings organized in the workplace or local neighbourhood where government supporters verbally and sometimes physically abuse the person concerned for being a “counter-revolutionary”. Others have had their telephone lines cut off or been ordered by police not to go out on certain days, such as on May Day or during the recent World Youth Festival which was held in Havana at the end of July. Still others who have attempted to travel to Havana or elsewhere have been ordered to return to their home towns. In some cases, equipment such as fax machines, typewriters and computers has been confiscated as well as books and documents, including reports of alleged human rights violations and copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Context of the recent detentions and threats

---

<sup>1</sup> This information is based on reports received by Amnesty International up until 20 August 1997.

The renewed crackdown is the most widespread since the round-up of dozens of members of unofficial groups supporting the project known as *Concilio Cubano*, Cuban Concilium, in February 1996<sup>2</sup>, and appears to be even more serious in its intent. It has coincided with reports during June and July of bomb explosions at three Havana hotels which caused minor injuries. The Cuban authorities have told the US Government that they have proof that persons based in the USA were behind the explosions, though the US authorities have complained that no such evidence has so far been handed over to them. Political violence in Cuba has been rare in recent years, although some US-based exile groups have threatened to carry out sabotage attacks and on occasion have attempted to do so. The Cuban Government claims that the US authorities do not do enough to prevent such groups from operating from their territory and even actively encourage them, especially given the general hostile attitude of the US Government towards Cuba. In 1996, the US Government, which has maintained a trade embargo on Cuba since 1962, stepped up its action against Cuba through the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (also known as the “Helms-Burton” Act). Among other things, the act authorizes the US President “to provide assistance to support efforts to establish democracy in Cuba”. As a result of this, the US Government has pledged financial assistance to any “transitional government in Cuba, committed to undertaking fundamental economic and political reforms”. In response, in December 1996 the Cuban National Assembly passed Law 80 or the “*Ley de Reafirmación de la Dignidad y Soberanía Cubana*”, “Law of Reaffirmation of Cuban Dignity and Sovereignty”, which made it illegal for anyone in Cuba to collaborate directly or indirectly in favour of the application of the “Helms-Burton” Act. A campaign was then organized around the 1997 May Day celebrations to encourage people to sign a declaration of loyalty to the government in support of Law 80. Although it was supposed to be voluntary, Amnesty International received reports that some people, including school children, were coerced into signing it.

The latest wave of detentions began around 1 May 1997. For some time, the Cuban authorities have been trying to demonstrate that opposition groups inside Cuba have links with US-based exile groups who advocate the violent overthrow of the current government. Many of those who have been detained recently have reportedly been questioned about possible links with particular Cuban exiles or exile organizations or have been told that they are under investigation for their possible involvement in sabotage attempts. For example:

---

<sup>2</sup> See *Cuba: Government Crackdown on Dissent*, AMR 25/14/96, April 1996, and *Cuba: Dissidents Imprisoned or Forced into Exile*, AMR 25/29/96, July 1996, for further details.

- Four political activists arrested on May Day, including **Alberto Perera Martínez** who is still in detention apparently under investigation on serious state security charges (see below), were reportedly questioned about sabotage attempts.
- A Cuban woman living in the USA - **Ileana María Iraeta** - who travelled to Cuba in May, reportedly to visit relatives, was detained upon her arrival in Havana on 3 May, after the Cuban authorities reportedly found traces of plastic explosives in her bag. At the time of writing, she is still believed to be held under investigation at the Havana State Security headquarters. Amnesty International is concerned that she may not have had access to a lawyer and that she may be under pressure to sign incriminating statements.
- **Rafael Santiago Montes**, an engineer and member of the unofficial *Partido Cubano de Renovación Ortodoxa*, Cuban Orthodox Renovation Party, was detained on 28 July 1997 and held for seventeen days by State Security before being released, apparently without charges. He was reportedly questioned about his possible involvement in the bombings, as well as about information he had reportedly provided to freelance journalists about an outbreak of haemorrhagic conjunctivitis in Havana which the authorities claimed was inaccurate.

Amnesty International condemns human rights abuses committed by both governments and non-governmental entities and acknowledges the right of the Cuban authorities to take appropriate action, in accordance with international human rights standards, to investigate and bring to trial those suspected of committing acts of violence. However, while it cannot rule out that certain individual members of unofficial organizations in Cuba may have been involved in violent activities, Amnesty International believes that the majority of those detained since April 1997 have been targeted because of their peaceful political beliefs and that the Cuban authorities are trying to deliberately discredit them by linking them to such activities. In most cases, Amnesty International is seeking their immediate and unconditional release on the grounds that they are prisoners of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. In cases where there is credible evidence that those concerned may have been involved in violent activities, Amnesty International urges the Cuban authorities to ensure that they are granted full judicial guarantees, including immediate and adequate access to a lawyer of their choice, in accordance with international standards for a fair trial.

The Cuban Government argues that it is justified in depriving perceived government opponents of fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression, association and assembly, in order to maintain the unity of the country against hostile attack from abroad. Amnesty International protests against human rights violations within its mandate irrespective of the politics of the government concerned. It takes no position on boycotts, sanctions or other kinds of coercive measures taken by second

governments. The fact that a country faces “terrorism”, civil conflict or hostile attack from abroad does not in any way diminish the entitlement of its citizens to all human rights as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Repression of dissent is built into Cuban legislation. Offences such as “*propaganda enemiga*”, “enemy propaganda”, “*desacato*”, “disrespect” or “contempt”, “*asociaciones, reuniones y manifestaciones ilicitas*”, “illegal associations, meetings and demonstrations” and “*peligrosidad*”, “dangerousness”, are widely applied to silence critics. Furthermore, judicial guarantees for those accused of political or politically-motivated offences are severely limited. Very few defence lawyers, all of whom are employed by the state, are willing to argue strongly in defence of their client for fear of reprisals against themselves. Prosecution witnesses are also sometimes subjected to undue pressures to testify against the accused. Those accused of crimes against state security (which include “enemy propaganda”) are tried in provincial courts and are normally not permitted access to lawyers while in pre-trial detention. Such detention can last several weeks or months. During that period they may be subjected to psychological pressures, including threats against relatives, to sign incriminating statements. Detainees are often held in cramped, windowless cells with electric lighting on 24 hours a day, a practice which some former prisoners have said made them lose all notion of time. The defence lawyer is often not permitted access to the defendant or the trial dossier until very shortly before the trial hearing is due, thus preventing adequate preparation of the defence case. In some cases vital prosecution evidence has been withheld from defence counsel on the grounds of state security. Cases involving more minor offences, such as “disrespect” or “dangerousness”, are tried in municipal courts. According to the Cuban Penal Code, the participation of a defence lawyer is “not indispensable” in municipal court cases although, if the defendant wishes, he or she may appoint one. However, in practice the defendant frequently has no opportunity to consult a lawyer, especially when, as often happens, the relatives are not informed of the arrest or the trial takes place within a day or so of arrest.

## **RECENT ARRESTS**

Attached is a list of 150 detentions which have taken place since April 1997. Given the severe limitations on the reporting of human rights violations, the real figure may well be higher. All those listed are said to be members of unofficial organizations of different kinds ranging from political and human rights groups to women’s organizations, independent press agencies and trade unions, and an independent medical association.

### **Journalists**

Yet again, journalists trying to work outside the framework of the state-controlled media, have been particularly targetted because of their attempts to send news reports to contacts

abroad, particularly in the USA. Many such reports are reproduced in foreign publications, posted on the Internet or cited on radio programs that reach Cuba. Since April at least 19 journalists have been detained in different parts of the country. Some who have tried to travel outside their home province have been ordered home by police. In July several journalists were detained for short periods in what appeared to be an attempt to keep them out of the way during the World Youth Festival. Several are said to have received menacing anonymous telephone calls, often during the night. Among the most serious cases are:

- ◆ **Lorenzo Paez Núñez**, a correspondent for the independent press agency *Libertad*, Freedom, whose case is described in more detail below, has been sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for "disrespect" and "defamation" because of his attempts to disseminate news relating, among other things, to possible human rights violations.
- ◆ **Héctor Peraza Linares**, who works with *Habana Press*, Havana Press, in Pinar del Río, was detained on 23 June 1997 and taken to the State Security headquarters where he is still under investigation on unknown charges. The authorities have reportedly refused to allow his lawyer access to the trial dossier.
- ◆ **Joaquín Torres Alvarez**, who took over the running of *Habana Press* when its director and founder, **Rafael Solano**, was forced into exile in 1996, was assaulted on 31 May 1997 by individuals believed to be working for State Security. The assailants punched and verbally abused him before neighbours were able to intervene and help him to safety. He reportedly made a formal complaint to the police and presented medical evidence documenting his injuries. To Amnesty International's knowledge, no investigation was carried out.
- ◆ Two other journalists - **Lázaro Lazo Alfonso** and **Olance Noguerras Rofe**<sup>3</sup> - left the country on 28 July after having been subjected over a long period to repeated threats of long-term imprisonment if they did not stop their journalistic activities. On the day of his departure, Olance Noguerras was reportedly picked up by State Security officials and taken to a house in Siboney, Havana, where he was provided with whisky and food. He was told that the authorities were pleased he had decided to leave. During the conversation, which was reportedly filmed, he said they questioned him about **Raúl Rivero Castañeda** (see below). He was asked to try to persuade Raúl Rivero to leave the country and warned that, if Rivero chose not to go, he would face long-term imprisonment.
- ◆ **Raúl Rivero Castañeda** was reportedly detained for several hours on 28 July and told that the authorities intended to destroy *Cuba Press*. He was re-arrested on 12 August by State Security and was taken to what appears to have been the

---

<sup>3</sup> See *Cuba: Dissidents Imprisoned or Forced into Exile*, AMR 25/29/96, July 1996, for background.

same house Olance Noguerras was taken to. He was held there until 15 August and, although treated respectfully, was repeatedly urged to leave the country.

- ◆ Four other journalists - **William Cortés**, **Efrén Martínez Purgarón** and **Marvín Hernández Monzón**, all of *Cuba Press*, and **Alberto Cruz Lima**, of *Patria*, Homeland - were detained in late July/early August and, at the time of writing, are still in detention.
- ◆ **Bernardo Arévalo Padrón**, who is the director of *Linea Sur Press*, an independent press agency based in Cienfuegos, was detained by State Security on 14 August 1997 in Aguada de Pasajeros and released three days later to await trial on a charge of “*difamación*”, “defamation”, reportedly on the grounds that he insulted various government officials, including President Fidel Castro, in his articles. He is forbidden to leave Aguada de Pasajeros until the trial takes place. On 6 June, local Communist Party officials had tried to organize an “act of repudiation” in front of his house but reportedly had to give up after local people refused to participate.

## PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

### Ana María AGRAMONTE CRESPO

President of the unofficial *Movimiento Acción Nacionalista*, National Action Movement, she was arrested on 1 May 1997 in Havana, reportedly because she refused to obey a police order to remain at home on that day when the authorities were holding a parade in honour of Labour Day. She was tried on 16 May 1997 at the *Tribunal Municipal del Distrito “Diez de Octubre”*, Municipal Tribunal of the 10th October District, in Havana, on charges of “disrespect” and “resisting authority” She was sentenced to 18 months’ imprisonment. She had no legal representation at the trial. She had been detained on several occasions over the previous 18 months and has been frequently threatened with imprisonment if she did not cease her activities.

### Reinaldo ALFARO GARCIA

Vice-President of the unofficial *Asociación de Lucha Frente a la Injusticia (ALFIN)*, Association for Struggle against Injustice, and a member of the executive of the unofficial *Partido Solidaridad Democrático (PSD)*, Democratic Solidarity Party, Reinaldo Alfaro García was arrested in Havana on 1 May 1997. He was released a few hours later after refusing to sign an official warning accusing him of intending to disrupt public order. He was re-arrested on 8 May. His family only found out several days later that he was being held in the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista. They were told initially that he was to be tried for “dangerousness”. However, no trial took place. On 13 July he was transferred to Combinado del Este Prison where he is reportedly awaiting trial on charges of “enemy propaganda” and “*difusión de noticias falsas contra*

*la paz internacional*”, “spreading false news against international peace”. The latter charge, which carries a maximum four-year sentence, can be applied to anyone who spreads false news with the aim of “putting in danger the prestige or credit of the Cuban State or its good relations with another State”. It is not clear what access, if any, he has had to a lawyer. His arrest reportedly came the day after he had delivered a letter, together with several mothers of political prisoners, to the President of the National Assembly of Popular Power, asking for an amnesty. The letter was also read out on US-based radio stations broadcasting to Cuba. Several of the mothers who delivered the letter have also reportedly been visited in their homes or summoned by the authorities and threatened with imprisonment. Reinaldo Alfaro is said to suffer from serious back problems as a result of previous surgery on his spine. He is reportedly not receiving adequate medical attention in Combinado del Este Prison and it is feared that the conditions he is being held in will aggravate his condition.

**Felix A. BONNE CARCASES, René GOMEZ MANZANO, Vladimiro ROCA ANTUNES and Marta Beatriz ROQUE CABELLO**

The four were arrested on 16 July 1997 in Havana, following extensive searches of their homes, and are being held in the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista. They are believed to be under investigation on a charge of “enemy propaganda” and possibly other serious charges. Some unofficial reports indicate that the authorities may be intending to seek a total prison sentence of 20 years. The four make up the *Grupo de Trabajo de la Disidencia Interna para el Análisis de la Situación Socio-Económica Cubana*, Internal Dissidents’ Working Group for the Analysis of the Cuban Socio-Economic Situation. On 27 June 1997 they had held a press conference for foreign journalists during which they criticized an official discussion document, “*El Partido de la Unidad, la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos que Defendemos*”, “The Party of Unity, Democracy and Human Rights which we Defend”, which is being circulated within the country as a prelude to the Communist Party Congress to be held in October. They also gave to the journalists a copy of their own critique of the document entitled “*La Patria es de Todos*”, “The Homeland is for Everyone”. Following the arrests, the Cuban authorities reportedly told foreign diplomats that they had been arrested because they had carried out “intense activity aimed at subverting the judicial and constitutional order of the Republic of Cuba”; that they were seeking to disrupt local government elections; that they had released false information about the state of the Cuban economy; and that they had the logistical support of US diplomats in Havana. The Cuban Government also claimed that it had proof that the four were working with “leaders of terrorist groups based on US territory”. Although, very unusually, Vladimiro Roca was reported to have had a short meeting with his lawyer on 24 July, since then none of the four is believed to have had access to defence counsel though they are permitted weekly family visits. They are said to be held in cramped, hot and unhygienic conditions in windowless cells with electric lighting on 24 hours a day. Amnesty International believes that the arrest of the four is

motivated solely by their calls for peaceful political change in Cuba. To the organization's knowledge, they have at no point used or advocated violence.

**Felix A. Bonn  Carcas s**, aged 58, is a former university professor (of engineering and physics) who was a founder member of the unofficial *Corriente C vica Cubana*, Cuban Civic Current, a group of university professors seeking peaceful political change. He lost his job at Havana University in 1992 as a result of the group's activities. He has been detained and harassed on several occasions. He suffers from asthma and diabetes and is reportedly being provided with the necessary treatment for his asthma while in detention.

**Ren  G mez Manzano**, aged 53, a lawyer and specialist in international law, is the founder of an independent lawyers' organization called the *Corriente Agramontista*, Agramontist Current. He was expelled from his lawyers' collective in 1995 after criticizing the national organization directing all lawyers' offices in Cuba. He has also been outspoken about a number of politically-sensitive court cases<sup>4</sup> and, before his expulsion, had defended several prominent political prisoners.

**Vladimiro Roca Antunes**, aged 54, is a specialist in International Economic Relations and the son of revolutionary hero and founding member of the Cuban Communist Party, Blas Roca. He is also a member of the organizing committee of the unofficial *Partido Social Dem crata Cubana (PSDC)*, Cuban Social Democratic Party, which seeks a peaceful transition to a democratic society and the rule of law. He has been subjected to frequent harassment because of his political beliefs. On 3 July 1997 stones were thrown at his house by individuals he believes were working for State Security. His wife reported that he was suffering from sweating and trembling when she visited him on 12 August. It is not clear what medical condition is affecting him or whether he is receiving any medical attention.

**Marta Beatriz Roque Cabello**, aged 52, is an economist and the director of the unofficial *Instituto Cubano de Economistas Independientes*, Cuban Institute of Independent Economists. She has been detained and threatened about her activities on several occasions in the past. She is said to have lost considerable weight while in detention and to be suffering from migraine, a skin rash and trembling. It is not clear whether she is receiving adequate medical treatment.

### **Pascual ESCALONA NARANJO**

---

<sup>4</sup> See *Cuba: Government Crackdown on Dissent*, AMR 25/14/96, April 1996, and *Cuba: Dissidents Imprisoned or Forced into Exile*, AMR 25/29/96, July 1996, for further details.



**Pascual Escalona Naranjo** is a government critic and husband of journalist **Mirta Leiva López Chávez**. The two were reportedly first arrested on 14 June 1997 as they were returning from Havana to their home in Manzanillo, Granma province, in eastern Cuba. Documents, said to include reports of human rights violations, were confiscated from them. They were released next day but Mirta Leiva was warned she may face a charge of “enemy propaganda”. On 9 July 1997 Mirta Leiva was again detained and threatened with a charge of “dangerousness” before being released some hours later. Her husband was also summoned by police and told that he would be tried for “dangerousness”. He was issued with an official warning which he refused to sign; on 22 July 1997 he was re-arrested. Two days later he was brought to trial in a municipal court on a charge of “dangerousness” on the grounds that he had refused to get a job. He reportedly alleged that, despite his attempts to get work, he had been refused jobs as a result of official orders. He was sentenced to one year’s imprisonment. The authorities have also reportedly threatened to take charge of the couple’s two children, on the grounds that they have been “deforming them morally and psychologically by inculcating them with ideas that are contrary to those postulated by communist education”. Amnesty International believes that the actions against Pascual Escalona and Mirta Leiva are a reprisal for their activities in defence of freedom of expression and association and, particularly, for the activities of Mirta Leiva. As a correspondent for the *Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (APIC)*, Cuban Independent Press Agency, Mirta Leiva has denounced on several occasions alleged human rights abuses carried out by the Manzanillo police.

#### **Dr Desi MENDOZA RIVERO**

Dr Desi Mendoza Rivero, president of the *Colegio Médico Independiente de Santiago de Cuba*, Santiago de Cuba Independent Medical Association, was reportedly detained on 25 June 1997 in Santiago de Cuba and taken to the State Security headquarters at Versalles. On 12 August 1997 he was transferred to Aguadores Prison, also in Santiago de Cuba. The authorities have not made any public statements about the reasons for his arrest. However, unofficial sources indicate that his detention was related to statements he had made regarding an epidemic of dengue fever in Santiago de Cuba which, according to him, had caused several deaths. He reportedly accused the authorities of covering up the true extent of the epidemic and of not taking sufficient measures to control it. He is believed to be facing various charges, possibly including “enemy propaganda”, “dissemination of false news” and “illegal association”. Dr Mendoza is said to have lost his job as a doctor after he founded the medical association in 1994. Journalist **Juan Carlos Céspedes** of the *Agencia de Prensa Libre Oriental (APLO)*, Oriente Free Press Agency, based in Santiago de Cuba, was also arrested on 12 June 1997 and reportedly asked to reveal his sources for an article he wrote about the dengue epidemic. He was released on 18 June and it is not clear if he is facing charges. Another APLO journalist,

**Daisy Carcasés Valle**, who also wrote an article about the epidemic, was detained briefly on 15 August 1997 and threatened with imprisonment.

### **Lorenzo PAEZ NUÑEZ and Dagoberto VEGA JAIME**

*Lorenzo Páez Nuñez, President of the Centro No Gubernamental para los Derechos Humanos "José de la Luz y Caballero", José de la Luz y Caballero Non-Governmental Centre for Human Rights, and Dagoberto Vega Jaime, an activist of the same organization, were detained on 10 July 1997 in Artemisa, Havana, and tried the following day in a municipal court. They were charged with "disrespect" and "difamación", "defamation" because of their attempts to disseminate to contacts in the USA information about allegations of human rights violations. Lorenzo Páez, who is also a correspondent for Libertad, Freedom, an independent press agency which is part of the Buró de Periodistas Independientes de Cuba (BPIC), Bureau of Independent Cuban Journalists, was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment and Dagoberto Vega to one year's imprisonment. Following their conviction, against which they were reported to be intending to appeal, they were transferred to Guanajay Prison, Havana province. According to reports, the trial proceedings did not adhere to international standards for a fair trial. In particular, the two defendants did not have time to appoint defence lawyers<sup>5</sup>.*

### **Héctor PERAZA LINARES**

**Héctor Peraza Linares** is a journalist working for *Habana Press*, Havana Press, an independent press agency. He was arrested on 23 June 1997 in Pinar del Río together

---

<sup>5</sup> For further information, see "*Cuba: Prisoners of Conscience Lorenzo Páez Nuñez and Dagoberto Vega Jaime*", AMR 25/25/97, 7 August 1997.

with his wife. His wife was released next day but he is currently being held under investigation on unknown charges at the State Security headquarters in Pinar del Río. His home was searched at the time of his arrest and documents and equipment were confiscated. On 27 June 1997 he was reportedly taken to the home of his previous wife where a search was also carried out and money reportedly confiscated. His lawyer has not so far been permitted access to the trial dossier on the grounds that it is secret. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the lawyer will have had direct access to his client. Héctor Peraza has been harassed and detained on several occasions since 1995 because of his work for *Habana Press* and frequently threatened with imprisonment if he did not stop his activities. On several occasions he has reportedly violated a police order not to leave Pinar del Río. Rafael Solano, the founder and director of *Habana Press*, was forced into exile in 1996 after being threatened with trial on several charges related to his journalistic activities.

**Nestor RODRIGUEZ LOBAINA and Radamés GARCIA DE LA VEGA**

**Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina**, President of *Jóvenes por la Democracia*, Young People for Democracy, **Radamés García de la Vega**, the group's Vice-President, and **Heriberto Leyva Rodríguez**, a prominent member of the group, have been persistently harassed since early 1996, when they set up the group and sent a letter to the Minister of Education proposing reform of the Cuban university system. On 6 June 1996, Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina and Radames García de la Vega were arrested in Havana and tried on charges of "disrespect" and "*resistencia a la autoridad*", "resisting authority". They were sentenced to 12 and six months' "*limitación de libertad*", "restricted liberty", respectively, as well as "*destierro*", internal exile or confinement, for a period of five years. They were ordered back to their home towns of Baracoa, Guantánamo province, and Palma Soriano, Santiago de Cuba province, respectively.

On 8 April 1997 Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina was re-arrested and tried two days later at a municipal court in Baracoa, again for "disrespect" and "resisting authority", and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment which he is serving in Combinado de Guantánamo Prison. On 28 April 1997 his mother and father, **Ramón Rodríguez**, were taken to a police station and forced to sign an "*acta de advertencia*", an official warning, and told that if they carried on defending their son they would be arrested. On 13 May, another member of the group, **Rafael Fonseca Ochoa**, was warned to give up his activities and forbidden to visit Baracoa.

Radamés García de la Vega was re-arrested on 30 April 1997 in Palma Soriano. On 17 June 1997, after being released on bail since 7 May 1997, he was tried and sentenced to eighteen months' "correctional work with internment" after being convicted of "*desacato a la figura del Comandante en Jefe*", "disrespect towards the Commander in Chief" (i.e. President Fidel Castro). Initially he was permitted to remain at home because of ill health but in mid-July he began his sentence at Pepe Blanca Reformatory in Palma Soriano.

On 13 July 1997 Heriberto Leyva Rodríguez was detained and taken to the provincial headquarters of the *Policía Nacional Revolucionaria (PNR)*, National Revolutionary Police, in Palma Soriano. He is said to have been charged with “disrespect” towards a judge because of statements he reportedly made in court at the end of the trial of Radamés García de la Vega, which included “*Esto es una prueba de que en Cuba no existe libertad ni democracia*”, “This is proof that in Cuba there is no freedom or democracy”. His trial was scheduled for 22 July 1997 but was unexpectedly postponed. At the time of writing, it has still not taken place and he is believed to have been released on bail.

The group had recently made public statements criticizing the holding of the World Youth Festival in Havana between 28 July and 5 August 1997. It is believed that the latest actions against them may have been partly aimed at preventing them from speaking out during the Festival itself. Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina went on hunger strike in prison during the period of the Festival. In response, the authorities transferred him to a punishment cell where he was reportedly held in very cramped conditions. According to reports, his state of health has deteriorated as a result of the hunger strike and he has been transferred to the prison infirmary. He has reportedly been told that, as punishment for having gone on hunger strike, he will in future be held in a cell on his own and that he will not be able to obtain early release when he has completed two thirds of his sentence, as is customary in such cases.

Amnesty International believes that Nestor Rodríguez Lobaina and Radamés García de la Vega are prisoners of conscience and that, if imprisoned, so too will be Heriberto Leyva Rodríguez. It believes that they have been persecuted solely because of their peaceful attempts to exercise their rights to freedom of association and expression.

#### **OTHER CASES OF CONCERN TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

##### **Odilia COLLAZO VALDES, Ileana SOMEILLAN and other members of the Support Committee for the Internal Dissidents’ Working Group**

Odilia Collazo Valdés, coordinator of the *Comité de Apoyo*, Support Committee, for the Internal Dissidents’ Working Group as well as secretary general of the unofficial *Partido Pro Derechos Humanos en Cuba (PPDHC)*, Party for Human Rights in Cuba, was detained on at least three occasions during July 1997. Both she and Ileana Someillán, also a member of the Support Committee as well as president of the unofficial *Madres por la Democracia*, Mothers for Democracy, who was also briefly detained on 8 August, were reportedly put under pressure, while in detention at Villa Marista, to testify against the four detained Working Group members. Five other members of the Support Group - **Rafael García Suárez, Horacio Casanova, Rubén Martínez Armenteros, Nancy**

**Gutiérrez** and **Alfredo Ruiz** - were detained briefly around the same time and reportedly put under similar pressures. Following the press conference on 27 June, at which the Working Group presented its document, *La Patria es de Todos*, several other members of the Support Committee, which is made up of representatives of some 20 unofficial groups, were subjected to short-term detentions, house searches, restrictions on their movement and threats of imprisonment, if they did not stop supporting the Working Group. Julio Grenier, who helped edit the Working Group's document, "*La Patria es de Todos*", was summoned several times by State Security during July and has reportedly been threatened with imprisonment. His wife, a doctor, has reportedly been prevented from working in recent weeks. Amnesty International is concerned that members of the Support Committee may also eventually face criminal charges in connection with their peaceful activities.

**Dr Leonel MOREJON ALMAGRO, Aguilleo CANCIO CHONG and other signatories of the *Declaración de la Alianza Nacional Cubana (ANC)*, Statement of the National Cuban Alliance.**

On 14 July the *Alianza Nacional Cubana (ANC)*, National Cuban Alliance, presented a statement to the Council of State and the National Assembly of Popular Power. The document requested the authorities to organize a national referendum to reform the Cuban Constitution to permit freedom of thought and association, pluralism and direct elections by secret ballot. Since then, all twelve signatories of the declaration have reportedly been visited in their homes by State Security officials and warned that they could face long prison terms, in the case of Dr Morejón for as much as 25 years. Dr Morejón is a lawyer and the National Delegate of *Concilio Cubano*. Following the February 1996 crackdown on *Concilio Cubano*, he was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment for "disrespect" and "resisting authority", a sentence which he served in full<sup>6</sup>. He was only released from prison on 9 May 1997.

One of the other signatories of the ANC statement, Aguilleo Cancio Chong, who is also President of the unofficial *Partido Acción Nacionalista*, National Action Party, was detained in Havana on 22 July 1997 and taken to the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista. It is not clear at the time of writing whether he is still in detention. He was originally detained on 1 May 1997, together with Lorenzo Pescoso, Jesús Pérez

---

<sup>6</sup> See *Cuba: Government Crackdown on Dissent*, AMR 25/14/96, April 1996, for details.

Gómez and Alberto Perera Martínez (who is still in detention - see below), and held until 11 June 1997 at Villa Marista, before being conditionally released pending trial on several state security charges. Upon his release on that occasion, he said that he was accused of “carrying out counter-revolutionary activities with the aim of destabilizing the nation” and questioned about his links with exile groups and his possible involvement in sabotage attempts. It is extremely unusual for people suspected of serious offences against state security to be released to await trial. If he is still in detention following his re-arrest on 22 July, Amnesty International believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience detained solely for his peaceful political activities. He has been detained on several occasions in the past, including in March 1997 when he was held by State Security for 20 days before being released without charge.

At the time of writing, another of the signatories of the ANC statement, Zohiris Aguilar Calleja, the wife of Dr Leonel Morejón Almagro, is reported to have been detained on 19 August 1997.

The other 9 signatories of the Declaration are: Cecilia Zamora Cabrera, Nery Gorotiza Campoalegre, Osvaldo Alfonso Valdés, Leonardo Reinoso Rodríguez, José Pastor León García, José Miranda Gata, Jesús Pérez Gómez (who is facing similar charges to Aguileo Cancio Chong but at the time of writing is at liberty), Ibraín Carrillo Fernández and Reinaldo Cosano Allén.

### **Maritza LUGO FERNANDEZ**

Maritza Lugo Fernández, a member of the national executive of the unofficial *Partido Democrático 30 de Noviembre*, 30 November Democratic Party, was summoned by the *Departamento Técnico de Investigaciones (DTI)*, Technical Investigations Department, in Havana on 15 April 1997 and told that she was to be brought to trial on a charge of *cohecho*, bribery, on the grounds that she had tried to bribe a prison guard to smuggle some money and a tape recorder into “El Pitirre” Prison (also known as Unit 1580) for political prisoner Raúl Ayarde Herrera. A soldier and another prisoner are also believed to be facing charges in the case. Maritza Lugo denies the charge. Shortly before she was summoned by the police, she had participated in an interview with the widow of a man who was allegedly shot by police in Havana on 23 March 1997 and it is feared that her detention may have been in reprisal for that. She was reportedly released pending trial but subsequently arrested on 16 August 1997. At the time of writing she is believed to be in detention at the Havana Women’s Prison awaiting trial. In May 1996, both she and her brother, **Osmel Lugo Gutiérrez**, who is vice-president of the same group, were summoned by immigration officials and offered the possibility of leaving the country even though neither had reportedly requested to do so. They refused the offer and both were subsequently arrested, Osmel on 22 May 1996, and Maritza on 3 June 1996.

Maritza was released two days later but Osmel was brought to trial on 20 December 1996 on a charge of “disrespect” and sentenced to two years and six months’ imprisonment on the grounds that he had slandered the head of State and the *Federación de Mujeres Cubanas*, Cuban Women’s Federation, in a letter to a political prisoner. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

### **Alberto PERERA MARTINEZ**

President of the unofficial *Comité Paz, Progreso y Libertad*, Peace, Progress and Freedom Committee, Alberto Perera Martínez was arrested on 1 May 1997 in Havana and taken to the State Security headquarters at Villa Marista. In early August he was transferred to the Carlos J. Finlay Military Hospital in Havana, said to be suffering from kidney problems, high blood pressure and weight loss. The authorities have not publicly acknowledged the reasons for his detention but unofficial sources indicate that he is under investigation on several charges which are believed to include “*otros actos contra la seguridad del estado*”, “other acts against state security”, a serious charge which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment or death for anyone who, among other things, organizes or belongs to armed groups. His lawyer, José Angel Izquierdo, a member of the *Corriente Agrarista*, has reportedly been unable to visit his client and has also been prevented from having access to the case file on the grounds that it is classified. Amnesty International believes that Alberto Perera Martínez may be a prisoner of conscience detained solely because of his peaceful political activities. He was previously detained in February 1996 during the crackdown on *Concilio Cubano*, the Cuban Concilium, and fined after being found guilty of “disrespect”, although it was rumoured that other serious charges might be brought against him. At that time and since, he has reportedly been put under pressure to leave the country.

### **Raúl RIVERO CASTAÑEDA**

Raúl Rivero Castañeda, the founder of *Cuba Press*, was detained by State Security officials at his home in Havana on 12 August 1997. Officials are also reported to have searched his home for several hours, removing several files relating to *Cuba Press*, as well as books, documents and a typewriter. When his wife went to Villa Marista on 13 August, she was informed by an official that her husband was being held there for “*posesión de documentos ilegales que constituyen un delito*”, “possession of illegal documents which constitute a criminal offence”, and that she should return on 19 August with a lawyer. However, on 15 August Raúl Rivero was released, apparently without charge. He told journalists that he had not been held at Villa Marista but at a house belonging to the Ministry of the Interior in the Siboney district of Havana. He said that he was treated respectfully but strongly urged to give up his journalistic activities or leave the country. Some of his belongings removed during the search were returned to him but not his typewriter. Raúl Rivero has been detained several times in the past. On a



previous occasion, on 28 July 1997 he was reportedly told that the authorities intended to destroy *Cuba Press* and that he would face long-term imprisonment if he did not cease his activities.

**Jesús YAÑEZ PELLETIER and his wife, Marieta MENENDEZ**

On 11 July 1997, State Security officials went to the home of 80-year-old Jesús Yáñez Pelletier, Vice-President of the unofficial *Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos (CCPDH)*, Cuban Committee for Human Rights, and carried out a thorough search. They reportedly confiscated a fax machine and a computer and then proceeded to arrest his wife, Marieta Menéndez. She was taken to a police station where she was held for several hours before being released, apparently without charge. She was reportedly threatened with charges of “disrespect” and “*instigación a la rebelión*”, “incitement to rebellion”. On 17 July, Jesús Yáñez was reportedly visited in his home by a senior State Security official who warned him to behave himself. He also reportedly told him that the authorities intended to bring to trial the four detained members of the Internal Dissidents’ Working Group.

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT**

Amnesty International urges the Cuban Government:

- To release immediately and unconditionally all those detained or imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- To publish immediately a list of all those detained in connection with their activities as members of unofficial groups, together with the reasons for their arrest and any possible charges they may be facing;
- To grant full judicial guarantees, in accordance with international human rights standards, including immediate access to a lawyer of their choice, to all those who remain in detention and are accused of politically-motivated offences;
- To cease immediately all forms of intimidation and coercion directed towards members of unofficial groups who are seeking solely to exercise their fundamental human rights as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- To ratify the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to bring Cuban legislation into line with international human rights standards so that the fundamental human rights of all Cubans are protected.