



amnesty international news release

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHES MEMORANDUM TO CUBAN GOVERNMENT

Amnesty International today (Thursday 9 November 1978) released the text of a memorandum to the Cuban government calling on it to publish precise statistics of the country's political prisoners or "counter-revolutionary offenders".

"We are acutely aware that a substantial number of Cuban prisoners are now among the longest ^{servng} political prisoners to be found anywhere in the world today", AI said. The memorandum was sent by AI to the government in March this year, following a mission to Cuba late last year, led by Thomas Hammarberg, Chairperson of the organization's International Executive Committee. The Cuban government received the mission delegates in their private capacities.

AI said it welcomed the release of several hundred political prisoners during the past year. But it was concerned that there were still more than 3,000 imprisoned, most of them under the "Progressive Plan" which was introduced in 1971 to give conditional freedom to cooperative prisoners having served at least a quarter of their sentences. Many of those still imprisoned, said AI, were long term prisoners in many cases serving 15 or 20 year sentences.

In its memorandum AI said the Cuban government should state precise charges against people imprisoned for their ideological opposition to the Revolutionary Government and should also explain the evidence to substantiate the charges.

On the question of prison conditions, the AI memorandum welcomed improvements provided for the majority of prisoners since the introduction of the "Progressive Plan", but expressed concern about the plantado group of prisoners who remain

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Amnesty International is a worldwide human rights movement which works impartially for the release of prisoners of conscience: men and women detained anywhere for their beliefs, colour, ethnic origin, sex, religion or language, provided they have neither used nor advocated violence. Amnesty International opposes torture and the death penalty in all cases without reservation and advocates fair and prompt trials for all political prisoners. Amnesty International is independent of all governments, political factions, ideologies, economic interests and religious creeds. It is financed by its membership and by subscriptions from all parts of the world. Amnesty International has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC), UNESCO and the Council of Europe, has cooperative relations with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, and has observer status with the Organization of African Unity (Bureau for the Placement and Education of African Refugees).

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outside the plan because they refuse to cooperate with the prison authorities for political reasons. Information received independently by AI suggested that certain prisoners in this group had been denied visits and correspondence over a long period, sometimes in excess of one year. AI said it was concerned that all prisoners should be granted these rights in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

AI said that the sentences of some political prisoners had been prolonged because of their estado de peligrosidad post-delictiva (state of post-criminal dangerousness). Special additional security measures had been applied to such prisoners, but the AI mission had not been given specific information concerning the acts and attitudes which had motivated the application of these measures. Officials in Havana told the AI mission this affected 26 prisoners.

Concern was also expressed about the substantial number of offences for which the death penalty can in principle be applied under Cuban law. In the memorandum the Amnesty International representatives urged that "very serious consideration be given to the consequences of increasing the range of offences which can incur the death penalty, and that equally serious consideration be given to formulating steps which could erradicate this penalty at the earliest possible opportunity."

In the early years of the revolution, the summary procedures of the Revolutionary Tribunals had been criticized. They restricted the rights of legal consultation and defence. Sentences passed by these tribunals were in many cases extremely severe, and were out of proportion to the alleged offence. AI urged that "serious consideration be given to the possible revision of all cases where sentences of extreme severity (such as 30 years' imprisonment) had been passed by the Revolutionary Tribunals."

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