

Report on the HR situation in Cuba over the last 5 month (January - May 2008)

Over the last five months, the Cuban regime arrested and jailed 22 dissidents and opposition activists, 13 of whom were still in prison at the time of this report. The closed door trials were problematic on several levels. They were held in judicial chambers without public access, tended to be so quick that they lacked basic procedural guarantees necessary for fair judgment, and had military and State Security personnel present in the room at all times. Most of these court cases were the result of dissidents being accused and found guilty of social dangerousness, insulting the Cuban state, or conspiracy charges around the attempt to commit some type of attack.

During this same time period, 4 out of the '75' prisoners of conscience from the 2003 crackdown were released from prison into forced exile in Spain. There were rumors of 3 more of the '75' being released at the same time, but in the end they were not set free and their names were not made public. Almost 50 political prisoners in total are very ill, and at least 10 are considered to be in critical condition. As of now, the Cuban regime has refused to grant any of them a conditional probation.

SUMMARY:

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1. General:

Over the last several months there has been a consistent campaign against dissidents and activists across the island, especially outside of Havana and within Cuba's prisons. These actions are proof that regardless of the cosmetic 'reforms' announced by Raul Castro's government, it is still dangerous to oppose the regime in even the smallest ways.

In May 2008, the **regime initiated a new campaign against dissidents** by claiming they had definitive proof that certain members of the opposition were receiving support from private US funds. Michael Parmly, the departing head of the U.S. Interests Section, was accused of carrying funds from the Miami-based Fundacion Rescate Juridica to the island following trips to the United States. There were TV spots accusing Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Laura Pollan, Jorge Luis García Pérez (Antúnez), Berta Soler and Vladimiro Roca of using these funds. It is still unclear what the fallout will be from these claims. However, the timing would indicate that the government would like to discredit the opposition and its critics prior the EU Council's vote on its Common Position.

There were also reports about the **closing of internet access at various European embassies**. According to sources on the island, the Norwegian and Slovakian embassies have already stopped providing internet access; the Canadian embassy had promised to open up an internet café for dissident, but has given up on the idea. Furthermore, dissents and other activists have expressed their fears about the future of internet access at Dutch embassy, which in the past has been one of the more reliable places they could go.

2. Prisoners dying in custody:

We do not been able to get information from every Cuban prison, but we have information from eleven of them where 30 people were reported as having died in custody. An additional 9 more persons were also mentioned, but their deaths need to be verified. The deaths were most commonly caused by cardio-infarctions (heart attacks), but this could have been exacerbated by prison conditions and the lack of adequate access to medical help and treatment. There was also proof in most cases of rough treatment by prison guards and wardens. Some deaths were the result of prisoners committing suicide.

- Genrry Ordóñez Quiñónez died on January 1, 2008 in Ariza 2 Prison in Cienfuegos.
- Three prisoners died in Kilo 7 Prison in Camagüey: Ismarío Álvarez Andrades (January 28, 2008) died after extremely, violently treatment by his jailors. Dennis Pupo Samora (January 18, 2008), Rafael Sierra García (February 23, 2008)
- Eliecer Vergara Pino died on January 30, 2008 in la Pendiente Prison in Santa Clara
- Four prisoners died in Combinado Prison in Guantánamo: Neuvis Ortiz Machado (April 20, 2008), Tomás Pantójas Rodríguez (February 16, 2008) Carlos Cobas Gaínza (February 21, 2008), and Pascual Correa (February 23, 2008)
- Leonardo Delgado Díaz, died in March, in Ariza 2 Prison in Cienfuegos after severe suffering from tuberculosis an NO medical assistance
- Jorge Luis Acuña Arias was murdered by fellow prisoner Adrián Guillén Gonzáles in La 60 Prison on Isla de Pinos during the 3rd week of March
- Jorge Ramírez Montesino died on March 22, 2008, in kilo 5 Prison in Pinar del Río.
- Andrés Vázquez Rodríguez died March 24, 2008 in Guanajay Prison in Habana Province.
- Michael Santos Depara died on April 1, 2008 in Las Mangas Prison in Granma
- Fernando Hurtado Carrillo April 5, 2008 in prison of Ariza 1 Prison in Cienfuegos
- Yislandis Gómez Izquierdo, age 23, died of a heart attack on April 16, 2008, in Ariza 1 Prison in Cienfuegos
- Maximiliano Troncoso Aguilar April 17, 2008 in Ariza 1 Prison in Cienfuegos
- Luís González Díaz died on April 19, 2008 in Cuba Sí Prison in Holguín.
- Israel Torres González, age 37, died of a heart attack on April 19, 2008, in Las Mangas Viejas Prison in Granma

3. Detained and Condemned Persons:

- On January 11, 2008 in Bayamo **4 young demonstrators were taken detained** for screaming anti-governmental slogans. Two of them, Yoandri Gutiérrez Vargas and Rigoberto Samora Rodríguez, are still in Nueva las Mangas Prison in Granma

- January 15, 2008 activist Dixán Saavedra Prat was condemned during a closed trial under the charge of 'public dangerousness'
- On January 25, 2008, **Víctor Luís Albrisa Díaz**, age 19, was sentenced to 2 ½ years in prison by the Municipal tribunal of Violeta in Ciego de Ávila for pre-criminal social dangerousness
- On February 1, 2008, **Deisy Talavera López** was taken to the women's prison of la Belloté, Matanzas. While being taken into custody her right hand was broken, she was chained and had her head forced down by agent's shoe.
- On February 6, 2008, dissident **Rafael Meneses Pupo** was sentenced to 2 years in prison by the Banes Municipal Tribunal
- On February 19, 2008 in Santa Clara, independent journalist and photographer **Filiberto Pérez del Sol** was detained by repressive agents for writing articles about the poor living conditions of people in suburbs.
- On February 21, 2008, a group of young people was arrested by special police on the accusation of being homosexuals in Havana.
- On March 25, 2008, activists **Adel Ramón López Nápoles and Santo del Pozo Rodríguez** were sentenced to 3 years in prison by the Municipal Tribunal of Isla de Pinos for the crime of illegal departure from the national territory
- In March, **Juan Bermúdez Toranzo, José Luis Rodríguez Chávez, y Leodán Mangana López, activists** from Fundación Cubana de Derechos Humanos (FCDH), were arrested and sentenced to 4 years each, without a public trial, minimum of procedural guarantees, and no family participation. In addition, the wife of José Luis (Daymí Nazaret Pereira) received 2 years of house arrest and Arquímides Camacho Millán is waiting for a trial while imprisoned in Valle Grande
- On April 1, 2008, **José Díaz Silva**, the president of the Opposition Organization for a New Republic, was sentenced to 4 years in prison by the Boyeros Municipal Tribunal for pre-criminal social dangerousness.
- On April 3, 2008, **Isrrael Sagarra Martínez** was sentenced to 3 years in prison by the Aguada Municipal Tribunal in Pasajeros for pre-criminal social dangerousness and ties to dissidents.
- On April 8, 2008 in Colón, Matanzas activist **Juan Pedroso Esquivel** was charged together with more dissidents, and his house surrounded by state police.
- **Abel López Pérez**, Director of the Movimiento de Derechos Humanos Resurrección Martiana and representative of the Consejo de Relatores de Derechos Humanos de Cuba in Guantánamo, was returned to prison on April 21, 2008. He had been sentenced to 4 years in prison in 2005 for 'disrespecting,' but had received a conditional discharge due to severe health conditions that included Hepatitis B, chronic renal failure and osteoarthritis.
- On April 22, 2008 **Mijaíl Capote Aranda** was sentenced to 4 years in el Típico Prison in Manzanillo for an attack, lack of respect and resisting arrest in February 2008. State security had observed him screaming "Abajo Fidel" in the street.
- On May 18, 2008, independent journalist **Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez**, law student **Luis Mell Morales Chávez** and human rights activists **Ricardo Rubén Barreto Fuentes, Higinio Euberto Rodríguez Batista, Osmani Rojas Díaz, Osmani Lazo and Yasmani Fría** were detained early in the morning for the accusation of "meeting with subversive elements".

- On May 19, 2008, in Lawton, Havana police detained approximately **50 young people** after accusing them of undisciplined social behavior and illicit actions.
- Human right activist **José Ramón Mendez Cuellar** was detained May 19, Havana accused of undisciplined social behavior and illicit actions.

4. Violent treatment and/or inhumane conditions

- On April 8, 2008, **Bárbaro Carmenate García** was violently mistreated by his jailers in Kilo 7 Prison in Camagüey. The doctor, who treated him in the provincial hospital, detected hematomas, a broken facial bone and several other fractures.
- Political prisoners: **Librado Linares García, Eduardo Pacheco Ortiz y Orlando Zapata** has been imprisoned with tuberculosis-ill prisoners. Tuberculosis was also reported as having appeared in the prison of Canaleta in Matanzas
- Other serious problems are the almost complete absence of medical care and pharmaceuticals in the prisons for the detained; denying long distance telephone calls to prisoners, as has been the case of Jorge Luis González Tanquero, president of Movimiento Independentista Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but has not been allowed to speak with his family.

5. Repressions against peaceful dissident, i.e. detentions, interrogations, physical aggression and “actos de repudio”

- In March 2008, independent journalist **Roberto Armando Sanchez Valdes** was denied **medical assistance by hospital staff** on the Isla de la Juventud due to his opposition activities
- On April 2, 2008, activists **Julio César López Rodríguez, Alfredo Fernández Silva and Domingo Lascano**, were arrested and detained for 8 hours for participation in the event organize by the unity of pacific dissent.
- On April 5, 2008, **4 independent labor unionist** arrested in Pinar del Río, interrogated by state security police. 20 bracelets of CAMBIO and 15 stickers and other documents were taken form them.
- On April 8, 2008, **Didio Fernández Luis**, president of “la Comisión Martiana de atención al presidio politico” was arrested for organizing opposition activities.
- On April 9, 2008, 7 activists, **Orestes Paino Viera, Carlos Ríos García, Carlos Ríos Otero, Aida Valdés Santana, Rafael Ernesto Ávila and Ramón de Jesús Pereda Gutiérrez** were arrested while indented to organize a press conference on invalidation of Cuban national parliament “Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular”. Others were visited in their houses and threatened.
- On April 21, 2008, 7 activists, **Idania Llanes Contreras, Yesmi Elena Mena Urbano, Pedro Yordi Tápanes García, Guillermo Fariñas Hernández, Roque Emilio Martínez Angúlo, José Alberto Ocaña Sarsine and Léster Fernández Samora** were arrested in Santa Clara while visiting their friend being in hospital from being of hunger strike.
- On April 21, 2008, a peaceful demonstration by the **Damas de Blanco** was broken up by state police. Since that time the house of Laura Pollan has been under the permanent surveillance. **Noelia Pedraza Jiménez, Dolia Leal Francisco,**

Bárbara Jiménez Contreras, Alejandrina García de la Riva, Laura Pollán Toledo, Tania Morejón Soca, Juana Gómez Riego, María del Carmen Martínez López, Olga Lidia González Barroso y Berta Soler Fernández were detained. Together with them was arrested a dissident: **Leonardo Miguel Bruzón Ávila**. In addition, on April 21st, independent journalist **Carlos Serpa Maceira** was detained in Havana from monitoring the Damas de Blanco's demonstration. He was fined 30 CUC and due to his permanent residency at Isla de la Juventud he was expelled from Havana in spite of the fact that his wife is a permanent resident there.

- On April 21, 2008, **Leonardo Miguel Bruzón Ávila, Omar Bustamante Mustelier y Armando Leiva Sánchez** were detained after repeated screaming liberty for political prisoners and held for 24 hours.
- On April 26, 2008 **Fidel Mojena Rivero** and **Raúl Velásquez Valdés** were interrogated by police in Artemisa, threatened, fingerprinted and fined 30 pesos
- On April 28, 2008 local **dissidents were threaten by social workers** on Isla de la Juventud after the national revolutionary police accused them of breaking the law of social danger and laziness..
- On May 5, 2008, **Victor Manuel Leon Piloto** was beaten during the interrogation by the police representatives. He was accused of contra-revolutionary activities.
- On May 7, 2008, young Cuban activist **Maikel Bencomo Rojas** was arrested for having a tattoo on his back "Abajo Fidel." He was condemned to two years in prison after being harassed for 8 months by state security agents.
- On May 14, 2008, an "acto de repudio" was conducted in Pinar del Río during a meeting of Partido pro Derechos Humanos.
- On May 21, 2008, human right activist and former political prisoner **Noel Gutierrez** was threatened by agent of State Security after he was visited by a foreign diplomat.
- Ex-prisoner of conscience **Pedro González Acosta** was detained in Pinar del Rio while coming back home with his 8-years child on the public street. His bags were searched and though nothing was found, they threaten him with imprisonment.
- Members of Partido Obrero Campesino in Granma were visited in their homes and threaten by the state police because to stop them from participating in organizing a congress being held on June 10th. Interrogated were: **Salvador Caballero Aliaga, Gerardo Valentín Mecía Hernández, César Martín Pelegrino, Viki Boroná Ástigui, Maritza Sánchez Collado** and **el presidente Alberto Moreno Fonseca**.
- Activist **José Hernández López** was a victim of an "actos de repudio" in Arabos, Matanzas, and detained after he put stickers of CAMBIO and NO COOPERACION on his door, his "handicapped card" has been taken because of his open critics toward Cuban government, and he has to register every Fridays at the police station.

6. Actions against the free flow of information

- On April 8, 2008, independent journalist **Ernesto Corría Cabrera** was detained and expelled from Havana to Camagüey, where he original resides for publishing El Camagüeyano Libre new bulletin.
- On April 12, 2008, activist **Ángel Luis Gallardo Mena** had his phone call interrupted by State Security police for sending reports on violation of HR to the radio in Miami.

- On April 16, 2008, jailers from the prison Guayabo on Isla de Pinos disconnected **Rolando Jiménez Posada** during his phone call while he was giving information about conditions to Consejo de Relatores.
- On April 18, 2008, independent journalist **Maiki Martorell Mayáns** was threatened by police in Manatí. The chief of police brought him in front of revolutionary organs and read a law about public danger, fingerprinted him and told him that he would be sent to prison if he continues contra revolutionary activities. The whole process begun after appearance of some stickers all over the region.

7. Fines for Dissidents

- **Ángel Luis Santiesteban Rodés** was taken to court for refusing to pay a 3600 pesos fine for private business activities of manufacturing bricks. However, the main problem was that he is not willing to end of membership in organization called: Fundación Cubana de Derechos Humanos.
- President of “Cooperativa de Ceramistas Independientes” de Isla de Pinos - **José Vladimir Araña Rosa**, announced that he was fined 300 pesos for building a small fence in front of his house that is higher than 90 centimeters.