

AI INDEX: AMR 25/09/00

EMBARGOED UNTIL 30 MARCH 2000

Cuba: harassment of dissidents must stop

Detained, threatened, evicted from their homes, or prevented from leaving the country -- dissidents in Cuba are increasingly being subjected to a range of punitive measures other than long term imprisonment, Amnesty International said today releasing a report entitled "*Short term detention and harassment of dissidents*".

"While the number of prisoners of conscience in Cuba has been decreasing and the long prison terms traditionally imposed on dissidents are becoming less frequent, short detentions and various forms of harassment are increasingly common," the organization said.

"The measures applied to stifle dissent may be changing, but the fact remains that the freedom to express opinions, organize meetings, or form organizations conflicting with government policies is still seriously curtailed in Cuba."

In its report, Amnesty International details concerns about punitive measures for the exercise of fundamental freedoms. These include forced exile, acts of intimidation and aggression, eviction, loss of employment, restrictions on travel, interrogations, house arrest, house searches and telephone bugging.

Episodes reported include the detention of 260 dissidents around the time of the Ibero-American Summit in Havana last year. Nine of those who remain in detention are considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience.

"All Cuban citizens -- including journalists, human rights defenders and political activists -- should be guaranteed full freedom of expression, association and assembly," Amnesty International said, renewing at the same time its call for the release of all prisoners of conscience.

ENDS.../

For more information, to arrange an interview or to request a copy of the report *Cuba: Short term detention and harassment of dissidents*, please call Amnesty International's press office on + 44 171 413 5562. Amnesty International's website – <http://www.amnesty.org>