

23 February 2000

Further information on EXTRA 161/99 (AMR 25/41/99, 12 November 1999 and follow-ups (AMR 25/42/99, 19 November 1999; AMR 25/43/99, 2 December 1999) - Prisoner of conscience / Arbitrary arrests

CUBA Dr. Oscar Elías BISCET GONZÁLEZ, human rights activist,
prisoner of conscience

New names: Fermín SCULL ZULUETA, possible prisoner of conscience
Eduardo DÍAZ FLEITAS, possible prisoner of conscience

Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet González is due to be tried on 25 February 2000 and the Attorney General has reportedly requested a seven year prison sentence. Amnesty International is calling for his immediate and unconditional release as a prisoner of conscience.

Oscar Biscet, President of the *Fundación Lawton de Derechos Humanos*, Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, was arrested on 3 November 1999 and originally charged with "*ultraje a los símbolos de la patria*", "insult to the symbols of the homeland". This was apparently because a Cuban flag was hung sideways in his home during an October press conference. The prosecutor's petition, issued in February, includes two further charges: "*desordenes públicos*", "public disorder", and "*instigación a delinquir*", "instigation to commit a crime".

Two other dissidents arrested in the run-up to the November Ibero-American Summit in Havana are to be tried by the same court on the same day as Oscar Biscet. Eduardo Díaz Fleitas, vice-president of the illegal *Movimiento 5 de agosto*, 5 August Movement, and Fermín Scull Zulueta were arrested in Havana on 10 November, at a demonstration that had begun peacefully in Dolores Park. According to the government newspaper, *Granma*, they were carrying "placards that offended the country and stirred up the crowd" (*carteles que ofendían al país e irritaban a la concurrencia*). The newspaper claimed the men were holding a banner calling for "justice" ("*justicia*") for children that are "killed" ("*asesinados*"), apparently a reference to abortion. A crowd of government supporters reportedly attacked and beat the pair, who have both reportedly been charged with "public disorder". The prosecutor has reportedly requested sentences of one year for Eduardo Díaz Fleitas and four years for Fermín Scull Zulueta.

According to Cuban government statements, both men have previous convictions. However, Amnesty International has not been able to obtain information on the exact charges on which they were previously convicted and is investigating their cases to determine whether they are prisoners of conscience.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- asking for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet González, on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully attempting to exercise his right to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- urging that two possible prisoners of conscience, Eduardo Díaz Fleitas and Fermín Scull Zulueta, be either released or tried according to international standards.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney-General

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera
Fiscal General de la República
Fiscalía General de la República
San Rafael 3, La Habana, Cuba
Telexes: 511456 fisge
Faxes: + 53 7 66 94 85
Salutation: Sr Fiscal General / Dear Attorney General

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Felipe Pérez Roque
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calzada No. 360, Vedado, La Habana, Cuba
Telexes: 511122 / 511464 / 512950
Faxes: + 53 7 33 3085 / 33 3460
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra
Ministro de Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba
Faxes: + 53 7 335261
Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

National Union of Jurists
Unión Nacional de Juristas
Apartado 4161
La Habana 4, Cuba

Editor of Granma (daily newspaper)
Sr Jacinto Granda de Laserna
Granma, Apdo 6260, La Habana, Cuba

and to diplomatic representatives of Cuba accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 March 2000.