

URGENT ACTION

CUBAN PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE FACING TRIAL

Cuban human rights defender Darsi Ferrer is due to be tried on 22 June on spurious charges of receiving illegally obtained goods and violence or intimidation against a state official. He has already been in pre-trial detention for 11 months. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience, and is calling on the authorities to drop the charges against him and release him immediately and unconditionally.

Darsi Ferrer is Director of the Juan Bruno Zayas Health and Human Rights Centre in the Cuban capital, Havana. He has also worked as an independent journalist, and written articles criticizing the Cuban health system. Since July 2009 he has been in pre-trial detention in a maximum security prison intended for inmates convicted of violent crimes.

In July 2009, Darsi Ferrer attempted to organize a march demonstrating against repression in Cuba. A few hours before the march was due to take place on 9 July 2009, Darsi Ferrer and his wife Yusnaimy Jorge Soca were detained by state security officials and police officers. Darsi Ferrer was handcuffed and beaten by more than eight police officers. They were released without charge a few hours later, but when they arrived home, they noticed that two bags of cement, some iron girders and two window frames, that had been on their property for a few months, were no longer there. According to neighbours, police officers had taken the construction materials. On 21 July, four police officers went to Darsi Ferrer's home and asked him to accompany them to a police station for questioning about the construction materials. Instead, he was driven to a maximum security prison on the outskirts of Havana and charged with receiving illegally obtained goods and "violence or intimidation against a state official". The latter charge apparently relates to comments Darsi Ferrer was overheard making, saying that an injustice was being committed, that sooner or later things would change in Cuba and this would not happen any more.

Ordinarily, an individual accused of these crimes would be bailed awaiting trial. However, Darsi Ferrer has been refused bail four times. He will be tried before a municipal court, but according to his wife, the presiding judge will be from a provincial court normally dealing with crimes against state security.

Darsi Ferrer has previously been detained and prevented from leading and participating in major human rights events. Since 2006 he has been detained or summoned to a police station around 10 December every year, apparently to prevent him from participating in activities celebrating International Human Rights Day, which falls on that day.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

v Calling on the authorities to release Darsi Ferrer immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience held simply because of his activism to promote freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JUNE 2010 TO:

Head of State and Government

Raúl Castro Ruz Presidente

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 8333085 (via Foreign Ministry); +1

2127791697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)

Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your Excellency

Interior Minister

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior, Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba

Fax: +53 7 8333085 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

+1 2127791697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Salutation: Su Excelencia/Your Excellency

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Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Cuba accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The right to a fair trial is limited in Cuba, with courts and prosecutors under government control. Cuba's National Assembly elects the President, Vice-President and the other judges of the Peoples' Supreme Court, as well as the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General. In addition, all courts are subordinate to the National Assembly and the Council of State, raising concerns over internationally recognised standards for fair trial and the right to trial by an independent and impartial tribunal. The right to a fair and proper defence is also unlikely to be fully respected, as lawyers are employed by the Cuban government and as such may be reluctant to challenge prosecutors or evidence presented by the state intelligence services.

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