

PUBLIC

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To: Health professional coordinators
From: Medical team / Americas program
Date: 17 January 2003

Further information on
MEDICAL ACTION

Ill-health of Juan Carlos González Leiva
Cuba

(also see AMR 25/007/2002, 31 July 2002)

Key words ill-health / ill-treatment / political prisoner

Amnesty International's concerns

Amnesty International is reiterating its concern for the health of Juan Carlos Leiva, a blind 37-year old lawyer, held in Holguín prison in Holguín province, Cuba. Juan Carlos Leiva reportedly weighs approximately 45 kilos following a (partial) fast from 4 September until 25 December 2002.

Amnesty International is also concerned that Juan Carlos Leiva could be maltreated. On one occasion he reportedly was left in the interrogation chamber and, despite being blind, had to find his own way back to his cell, bumping into obstacles. He has also reportedly been denied the use of a cane. Furthermore, he stated that food and water caused a burning sensation en route in his digestive system, which should be investigated.

Juan Carlos Leiva's his wife, Maritza Calderín, and his brother José have also said to have been harassed and threatened with imprisonment.

Background information

Juan Carlos González Leiva was part of a group of human rights activists who were arrested in Antonio Luaces Iraola Provincial Hospital in Ciego de Ávila on 4 March 2002. They had visited the hospital in support of Jesús Alvarez Castillo, a hospitalised journalist. Earlier that day the journalist had been on his way to cover a meeting of the Cuban Foundation for Human Rights, but when he was reportedly stopped and attacked by the police. At the hospital the group of men protested against this attack and shouted statements such as "Long live human rights". They were later reportedly beaten and arrested by state security officials. They were charged with "disrespect", "public disorder", "resistance" and "disobedience".

Recommendations

Please write letters in Spanish or English to the authorities below, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- Introducing yourself in your professional capacity and/or as a member of Amnesty International and referring to your previous correspondence if applicable;
- Seeking information about Juan Carlos González Leiva's current state of health;
- Asking for him to be provided with appropriate support relating to his blindness;
- Asking for guarantees for his safety;

- Urging that he benefit from judicial guarantees for a fair trial;
- Stating that you recognize that economic factors, including the US trade embargo, may affect standards of nutrition and medical care in prisons, but that conditions of detention should conform to internationally recognized minimum standards, such as those outlined in the *UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* and the *UN Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*.

Addresses

Head of State and Government

Dr Fidel Castro Ruz

Presidente de los Consejos de Estados y de Ministros

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: via Ministry of Foreign Affairs: + 53 7 333 460

Salutation: Su Excelencia/ Your Excellency

Attorney-General

Dr Juan Escalona Reguera

Fiscal General de la República,

Fiscalía General de la República

San Rafael, 3

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: + 53 7 669 485

Salutation: Señor 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

Fax: + 53 7 333 460

Salutation: Señor Ministro / Dear Minister

Interior Secretary

General Abelard Coloma Ibarra

Ministro del Interior y Prisiones

Ministerio del Interior

Plaza de la Revolución

La Habana, Cuba

Fax: + 53 7 8301 566

Salutation: Señor Ministro, Dear Minister

Please send copies of appeals to diplomatic representatives of Cuba accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within six weeks of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 30 March 2003, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Monitoring of actions

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter writing actions. If you write one, two or more letters please send us an e-mail and let us know. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters you write e.g. AMR 25/002/2003 - 3. Please send your message to medical@amnesty.org Thank you