

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTERS DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE

Ladies in White Niurka Luque Álvarez and Sonia Garro Alfonso, and Sonia's husband Ramón Alejandro Muñoz González, are believed to have been detained without charge since March.

On 17 March in the Cuban capital, Havana, the Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) were demonstrating peacefully to commemorate the anniversary of the 2003 crackdown on dissidents, when 18 of them were arrested and taken to police stations across the city. All but Niurka Luque Álvarez, were released a few hours later.

The following day, Lady in White Sonia Garro Alfonso, and her husband, Ramón Alejandro Muñoz González, were arrested at their home in Havana: around 50 police forced their way into the house and fired rubber bullets at them. According to her sister, Sonia Garro Alfonso was wounded in the foot by one of these bullets.

Since then the two women have been sent to various detention centers, and are now held in Guatao women's prison in the outskirts of Havana. Ramón Alejandro Muñoz González is being held in Havana's Combinado del Este prison. Both women are reported to be in poor health. Sonia Garro Alfonso was suffering a kidney problem before her arrest that may require surgery. According to her daughter, Niurka Luque Álvarez regularly suffers epileptic fits. The women are allowed visits every week, and Ramón Alejandro Muñoz González every two weeks.

Although all three have access to a lawyer, it is not clear what they have been charged with. Relatives told Amnesty International that the authorities have accused Sonia Garro Alfonso of attempted murder and public disorder, but none of them has been formally charged. They have yet to be told if or when they will be put on trial. They think they were arrested because of the visit of the Pope Benedict XVI to Cuba in March 2012 and their activism with the Ladies in White, and that it is intended to intimidate other government critics.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to charge Niurka Luque Álvarez, Sonia Garro Alfonso and Ramón Alejandro Muñoz González with internationally recognizable criminal offenses or release them immediately;
- Asking them to ensure that anyone charged is given a fair trial in compliance with international standards;
- Urging them to cease immediately the harassment and intimidation of Ladies in White and other citizens who peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 AUGUST 2012 TO:

Head of State and Government

Raúl Castro Ruz
Presidente de la República de Cuba
La Habana,
CUBA

Fax: 011 53 7 83 33 085 (via Foreign Ministry)

011 1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Interior Minister

General Abelardo Colomé Ibarra
Ministro del Interior y Prisiones
Ministerio del Interior,
Plaza de la Revolución,
La Habana,
CUBA

Fax: 011 1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)

Email: correominint@mn.mn.co.cu

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Attorney General

Dr. Darío Delgado Cura
Fiscal General de la República,
Fiscalía General de la República, Amistad
552, e/Monte y Estrella, Centro Habana
La Habana,
CUBA

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Also send copies to:

Embassy of Switzerland, Cuban Interests Section
2639 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009

Phone: (202)797 8518 | Fax: (202) 797 8521 | Email: cubaseccion@igc.apc.org

Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Ladies in White were commemorating on 17 March 2012 the anniversary of the 2003 Black Spring (*Primavera Negra*). In 2003, over several days, the Cuban authorities arrested 75 men and women for their peaceful expression of critical opinions of the government. They were subjected to summary trials and were sentenced to prison terms of up to 28 years. Amnesty International declared the 75 convicted dissidents to be prisoners of conscience, and the last of them was released in April 2011.

The Ladies in White were formed at that time as the group of female relatives of the 75 prisoners of conscience. After their releases in 2011, the Ladies in White continued their activity of campaigning for the release of remaining political prisoners and for the lifting of restrictions on fundamental civil and political freedoms in Cuba. Members of the organization have been repeatedly prevented from meeting for any purpose, including to attend mass on Sundays.

Pope Benedict XVI visited Cuba from 28-30 March 2012, and celebrated open air masses in the city of Santiago de Cuba and the capital, Havana, and held meetings with the leaders of the Cuban Catholic Church and the Cuban authorities. Government critics had hoped the Pope's visit might herald an opening on the part of the Cuban authorities, but instead they were subjected to further repression. Over 200 government critics were apparently detained during the Pope's visit, and many others held under house arrest, with the express purpose of preventing them from travelling to attend the masses and take part in protest activities.

Names: Niurka Luque Álvarez (f), Sonia Garro Alfonso (f), Ramón Alejandro Muñoz González (m)

Issues: Arbitrary detention, Intimidation, Freedom of expression

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