

URGENT ACTION

THREE BROTHERS DETAINED FOR DISSENT

Three brothers who are members of a dissident organization are being detained on trumped-up charges. Amnesty International believes them to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Alexeis Vargas Martín and his two 17-year-old twin brothers, Vianco Vargas Martín and Django Vargas Martín have been detained, charged by the police with using “violence or intimidation” against a state official (*atentado*). The brothers, who live in the neighbourhood of Veguita de Galo in the city of Santiago de Cuba are all members of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (Unión Patriótica de Cuba, UNPACU).

In the afternoon of 27 November 2012, Alexeis was returning to his house where a government-sanctioned demonstration (*acto de repudio*, see background information) was underway at the time. The house was surrounded by government supporters as his mother, Miraida Martín Calderín, a member of the Ladies in White protest group, was meeting with other members of the same organization. Alexeis was refused entry to his own home and arrested by police and officials from the Department of State Security. On 2 December, Vianco and Django Vargas Martín - then only 16 years old - went with friends to protest outside the Micro 9 police station in the city of Santiago de Cuba against the detention of their brother. They were arrested and also charged by police with *atentado*.

The three brothers have yet to be formally charged by the public prosecutor and their lawyer has been refused access to their case-files. Amnesty International believes that their arrest and detention is in response to their peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and that it is intended to send a message of intimidation to other government critics, particularly other members of UNPACU. For this reason the organization has adopted them as prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to release Alexeis Vargas Martín, Vianco Vargas Martín and Django Vargas Martín immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to remove unlawful restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO:

Head of State and Government

Raúl Castro Ruz
 Presidente de la República de Cuba
 La Habana, Cuba
 Fax: +41 22 758 9431 (Cuba office in Geneva); +1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)
 Email: cuba@un.int (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)
Salutation: Your Excellency

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

And copies to:

Interior Minister

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra
 Ministro del Interior y Prisiones
 Ministerio del Interior,
 Plaza de la Revolución,
 La Habana, Cuba
 Fax: +1 212 779 1697 (via Cuban Mission to UN)
 Email: correominint@mn.mn.co.cu
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Alexeis Vargas Martín, aged 22, is being held at Aguadores Prison in Santiago de Cuba province, while Vianco and Django Vargas Martín are held at the Mar Verde prison for men in the same province. They are housed in a special prison wing (*destacamento*) for minors.

The charge of *atentado* carries a prison sentence of up to five years.

In early July 2013, officials from the Department of State Security told the brothers' family that they could be released on bail. The three brothers, however, have refused this as they reject the charges made by the police and insist on their innocence.

Miraida Martín Calderín was also arrested on 2 December 2012 as she protested outside the Tercera Unidad police station in Santiago de Cuba city and charged by police with public disorder (*desordenes públicos*). She was held at the Mar Verde prison for women and released on 20 February 2013, and charges against her were dropped.

Acts of repudiation (*actos de repudio*) are government-coordinated demonstrations, usually carried out in front of the homes of government critics, attended by government supporters, state officials and law enforcement agencies, aimed at harassing and intimidating opponents of the government, and are often used to prevent them from travelling to take part in activities. During an act of repudiation, political opponents and human rights activists are subjected to verbal and physical abuse by groups of people chanting pro-government slogans. Police are usually present but do not intervene to stop the assaults. Such incidents frequently involve the Rapid Response Brigades (*Brigadas de Respuesta Rápida*), a structure set up in 1991 and composed of Communist Party volunteers whose task is to deal with any sign of "counter-revolution". Local human rights activists and others believe these incidents are orchestrated by Cuba's security services to intimidate any opposition. Miraida Martin Calderin has told Amnesty International that members of the Rapid Response Brigade threw stones at her house during the act of repudiation on 27 November 2012.

The Patriotic Union of Cuba is a civil society organization which advocates for greater civil liberties on the island..

Names: Alexeis Vargas Martín, Vianco Vargas Martín and Django Vargas Martín
m/f: all m

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