

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/cuba-call-for-release-of-independent-24-09-2012,43441.html>

Americas - Cuba

Nonsensical charge

## Call for release of independent journalist accused of insulting president

24 September 2012

Harassment of dissidents has never really stopped since Raúl Castro became president in 2006 but, if they are detained, it is usually for short spells. The arrest of **Calixto Ramón Martínez Arias**, a reporter for the independent *Hablemos Press* agency, could prove to be the exception and could hark back to an era when dissidents were detained for longer periods.

Martínez was arrested on 16 September and has been held ever since on a charge of insulting the president, which could lead to a three-year prison sentence.

"It is hard to see how the investigation into a spoiled consignment of medicines that Martínez was carrying out at the time of his arrest, or his earlier revelations about cholera and dengue, which the authorities confirmed, could result in a charge of insulting the president," Reporters Without Borders said.

"This charge is totally absurd, just as any attempt to make an example out of this case will be futile. Information of public interest should be disseminated, discussed and debated. Such a debate is clearly lacking in the official media, one of whose journalists is still detained while others have chosen exile. We call for Martínez's immediate release."

Reporters Without Borders added: "The Cuban government must accept civil society's right to ask questions and report information in accordance with the conventions on civil and political rights it signed in 2008, but has not yet ratified. Will the other members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) remind it of the need to respect this principle?"

*Hablemos Press* editor **Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez** tried without success on 21 September to obtain permission to visit Martínez, who was arrested near José Martí international airport. Dissident journalists who were present were threatened with arrest and some were briefly detained.

According to the latest information, Martínez was transferred to Enrique Cabrera Hospital on 20 September for treatment to blows he received to the left eye.

Martínez is being persecuted by the authorities, who want him to go back to Camagüey, where he was from, although he now lives and works in Havana. In the past 10 years, he has been [sent back](#) to Camagüey ten times, although the law on internal migration, which used to make it hard for provincial residents to move to the capital, was relaxed at the end of 2011.

He is the third *Hablemos Press* journalist to be detained this month.

### Government journalists defect

The day that Martínez was arrested, **Mairelys Cuevas Gómez**, an editor with the Communist Party newspaper *Granma*, took advantage of a working visit to Mexico to go the US border and request asylum.

She was following the example of **Luis López Viera**, the sports editor of *Juventud Rebelde*, another official newspaper, who asked the British immigration authorities for asylum a month

earlier, on 15 August, as the London Olympics were ending.

Reporters Without Borders would like to hear the Cuban government's reaction to the departure of journalists it employs, and to know more about the fate of [José Antonio Torres](#), another reporter for the Cuban state media, who has been held for more than a year on an unexplained charge of spying.

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