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CUBA PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE FACE TRIAL

The trials of Manuel Otero Alcántara and Maykel Castillo Pérez, prisoners of conscience, are set to start on 30 May and 31 May, respectively, in Cuba. Otero Alcántara and Castillo Pérez have been in pre-trial detention for nearly a year, after being detained for criticizing the Cuban government. A prosecutor has requested that they be sentenced to seven and ten years in prison. We urge Cuban authorities to grant access to international organizations to monitor the trials and to immediately unconditionally release these prisoners of conscience.

After having reviewed all available evidence, Amnesty International considers that they are being detained only because of exercising their right to criticize their government and has named them, along with other Cubans detained following the 11 July protests, prisoners of conscience.

Write to the President urging him to:

- grant access to international organizations to monitor the trials
- immediately and unconditionally release Maykel Castillo Pérez and Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara.

Write to:

Mr. Miguel Díaz-Canel
President of Cuba
Twitter: @DiazCanelB
Facebook: @PresidenciaDeCuba
Salutation: Dear President of Cuba:

And copy:

Mr. Guivel Orozco Ortega
Counsellor & Chargé d'affaires, a.i.
Embassy of the Republic of Cuba
388 Main Street
Ottawa, ON K1S 1E3
Fax: 613 563-0068
Email: cuba@embacubacanada.net

Additional information

On 11 July 2021, thousands of people took to the streets in Cuba to demonstrate peacefully, in an exercise of their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and to express their discontent about the economic situation in the country. In response to the protests, authorities, under the leadership of President Miguel Díaz-Canel, scaled-up a decades-long policy of repression that criminalizes peaceful protest and imprisons ordinary Cubans for expressing their views.

Hundreds of human rights activists, artists and ordinary Cubans have been detained, and criminalized for participating in the nation-wide protest. Some remain imprisoned, and are yet to receive a trial, and many others have faced unfair trials, that have been characterized by violations of due process, and charges for crimes such as: “contempt,” “public disorder,” and “resistance”, all crimes inconsistent with international human rights standards.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara is an artist and member of the San Isidro Movement. Amnesty International had declared him a prisoner of conscience on three previous occasions. On 11 July 2021, he was detained by two state security agents in Havana, shortly after posting a video in which he declared his intention to join the protests.

Maykel Castillo Pérez, more commonly known by his artistic name: "Maykel Osorbo," is a Cuban musician and member of the San Isidro Movement. He is also one of the co-authors of the song “Patria y Vida”, that has become a protest anthem for its critical view of the Cuban government. The musician has been subjected to constant harassment by authorities and has been arbitrarily detained on many occasions. On 18 May 2021, state security agents detained the musician at his home, and for the 10 days following his arrest, refused to provide information on his whereabouts to family and loved ones. On 19 August 2021, Amnesty International named Otero Alcántara and Castillo Pérez [prisoners of conscience](#), along with other Cubans detained in the context of the protests of 11 July 2021. On 24 March 2022, the organization issued a [press release](#) calling authorities to allow it and other human rights observers access to the country to monitor the trials. On 26 May 2022, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issued a [joint statement](#) calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Otero Alcántara and Castillo Pérez, ahead of the start of their trials.

Cuba remains the only country in the Americas that does not permit Amnesty International to visit to carry out human rights monitoring work.