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**Cuba: Activist sentenced to three years in jail after criticising Fidel Castro**

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/03/cuba-activist-sentenced-to-three-years-in-jail-after-criticising-fidel-castro/>

A three year sentence against the leader of a Christian pro-democracy movement after he criticized Fidel Castro is a stark illustration of ongoing restrictions to the right to free expression in Cuba, said Amnesty International.

Dr. Eduardo Cardet Concepción, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement (*Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, MCL*) was sentenced on Monday 20 March, his wife told Amnesty International.

He was charged with attacking an official of the state (*atentado*) after he publicly criticized former Cuban leader Fidel Castro a few days after his death. During an interview with Madrid-based radio station *esRadio*, aired two days before his arrest, Cardet described the mourning in Cuba following the death of Fidel Castro as imposed, and said: “Castro was a very controversial man, very much hated and rejected by our people.” His lawyer has ten days to file an appeal.

“For decades, the Cuban authorities have harassed and intimidated members of the Christian Liberation Movement in an attempt to silence any dissenting ideas,” said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

“Despite some recent openness, we see how the Cuban authorities continue to control free expression. It is beyond belief that people are still routinely arrested for criticizing a politician or for writing an opinion on a wall – as was the case of graffiti artist Danilo ‘El Sexto’ Maldonado. Sadly, Cuban courts continue to fail to provide a rigorous check and balance to executive powers.”

“There is no doubt that Dr Cardet is a prisoner of conscience, put behind bars for speaking his mind. He must not be made to spend a second longer in jail.”

Provisions of the Cuban Criminal Code, such as contempt of a public official (*desacato*), resistance to public officials carrying out their duties (*resistencia*) and public disorder (*desórdenes públicos*) are frequently used to stifle free speech, assembly and association in Cuba.

The Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, a Cuban-based human rights NGO not recognized by the state, documented a monthly average of 827 politically motivated detentions in 2016.

The Christian Liberation Movement (*Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, MCL*) is a prominent actor in the pro-democracy movement in Cuba. According to its website, it is a movement for peaceful and democratic change and respect for human dignity. It was founded in 1988 by Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, who became a visible figure of the Cuban political opposition, and four other activists.

Amnesty International has documented harassment and intimidation of members of the MCL for decades. In 1991, after Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas presented a petition calling for a national referendum relating to constitutional reform, he had his home destroyed by over 200 people, said to be members of a Rapid Response Brigade. After Oswaldo Payá announced his intention to put himself forward as a candidate for deputy to the National Assembly for the municipality of Cerro, Havana, members of his organization were reportedly subjected to frequent questioning and short-term detention.

**Read more:**

Cuba: Demand release of human rights defender: Dr Eduardo Cardet Concepción (Urgent Action, 31 January 2017)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr25/5601/2017/en/>

Cuba: Cuban Graffiti artist released: Danilo Maldonado Machado (Urgent Action, 23 January 2017)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr25/5545/2017/en/>

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