

## MANIFESTO “FOR THE LIBERATION OF CUBAN PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE”

Presented by FAES to the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba

As denounced by European Union and other prestigious institutions, in Spring 2003 some seventy-five peaceful Cuban writers, journalists, librarians and politicians were unjustly detained and condemned to sentences of up to twenty years in prison. These included Raúl Rivero Castañeda, Winner of the World "Free Press" Award granted by UNESCO, and recognized in Cuba as the most important voice in contemporary poetry and journalism.

The alleged crimes of these individuals consisted of producing critical writings on the situation that exists within the country, denouncing the violation of human rights, lending “prohibited” books and canvassing for signatures —as authorized by Cuban law— for a referendum to take place on the country's political fate.

Unfortunately, these seventy-five prisoners, —of which half a dozen have been released from prison due to the fact that they are suffering from serious illnesses—, are not the only political prisoners that exist on the Island. These latest victims of repression have joined hundreds of other prisoners of conscience incarcerated in Cuban jails, such as the well-known case of Dr. Óscar Elías Biscet, founder of an organization devoted to protecting human rights.

To this violation of the basic rights of these Cubans we must add the terrible aggravating circumstances that have been constantly denounced by their relations: the miserable conditions in which they are kept, isolated in unhealthy cells, poorly nourished, sometimes beaten, and always humiliated by soldiers and policemen who seem to have been given express instructions to maltreat them in order “to break them down” and make them give up their democratic convictions, a frequent practice in the repressive tradition of this kind of totalitarian régime.

In view of these deplorable facts, we who sign this Manifesto demand that the Cuban Government authorize the immediate and unconditional liberation of all prisoners of conscience, reminding it that Cuba is a signatory of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and that no possible alibi exists to justify or explain this flagrant violation of the civil and political rights of Cubans.

Until this happens, and as long as prisoners of conscience exist in Cuba, democrats throughout the entire world shall not cease to condemn the government and defend its victims.

Madrid, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2004