

## Cuba

<b>Response to Information Request Number:</b>	CUB98002.ref
<b>Date:</b>	2 December 1997
<b>Subject:</b>	Cuba: Information on the Liga Cívica Martiana
<b>From:</b>	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
<b>Keywords:</b>	Cuba, Political Opposition, Detention

### Query:

What is the current status of the Liga Cívica Martiana in Cuba? Is its president, Miguel Angel Aldana Ruiz, in the United States and is William Ernesto Herrera Diaz the Secretary General of the group?

### Response:

The Liga Cívica Martiana (LCM) was founded in the late 1970s or early 1980s by a group of political prisoners while they were still in prison. One of the founding members, Ariel Hidalgo, is currently in the United States where he founded the Cuban Human Rights Bureau of Information (Cernuda, 6 November 1997). According to the *Nuevo Herald*, the Liga was still active in Cuba as of 10 October 1997. However, its membership and focus have substantially changed since it was originally founded. The current members appear to be young adults and it was referred to as a "dissident youth group" in an October 1995 Human Rights Watch/Americas publication.

In October 1997, the Liga sent a letter to the Cuban government petitioning for a plebiscite on the system of government. William Herrera Diaz, one of the leaders of the Liga [Herrera Diaz's position with the Liga is not specified in the source], reported that the letter was sent to the National Assembly of People's Power (*Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular*), to its president, Ricardo Alarcon, and to the Minister of Justice, Carlos Amat (*Nuevo Herald*, 10 October 1997).

Earlier in the year, the president of the Liga and member of Concilio Cubano, 26-year old Miguel Angel Aldana was forcibly exiled from Cuba. On 24 February, he was arrested in a church on *la calle Reina*, in Havana during a meeting to organize activities for the first anniversary of the murder of the four members of Brothers to the Rescue. He was told that he would be charged with *peligrosidad* and sentenced to four years in prison if he did not leave the country by the first of May (*Nuevo Herald*, 11 April 1997). *Peligrosidad* translates literally as "dangerousness." In the Cuban Penal Code, Articles 72-90, which define the term, come under the heading, "Dangerous Status and Security Measures." "Dangerous" people are those who act in a manner that contradicts "socialist morality" or engage in "anti-social behavior," and they may be sentenced for up to four years in prison on the grounds that the authorities believe the individual has a "special proclivity" to commit crimes, even though he or she might not have actually committed a crime (Payne, November 1997). Aldana sought exile in the U.S. arriving in Miami in early April. He was greeted by Arturo Rodríguez and Carlos Solís, two other exiled members of the LCM (*Nuevo Herald*, 11 April 1997).

According to the Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba (Independent Press Agency of Cuba, APIC), the president of the Liga Cívica Martiana (LCM), Aldana, called a press

conference in Havana in late June or early July 1996, to try to speed up the Ethics Commission's action with regard to charges against Hector Palacio, president of the Democratic Solidarity group. Aldana claimed he had documentation confirming the charges against Palacio (APIC, 3 July 1996). It was also reported that political prisoner, Ramón Varela Sánchez, vice president of the LCM, was beaten in prison 1580 in Havana, also known as Pitirre, when he tried to assist another prisoner who needed medical assistance. Due to the severity of the beating by prison guards, Vicent and Jaguar, Varela required hospitalization in the prison hospital (*Buró de Información*).

Human Rights Watch/Americas reported that in July 1995, state security agents carried out a sweep against members of the LCM. Miguel Angel Oliva, a member of the LCM from Calabazar, was arrested and detained at Villa Marista. On 31 July, state agents searched the home of Ramón Varela Sánchez, the vice president of the LCM, and seized documents. Varela was then arrested and taken to Villa Marista.

Both Oliva and Varela were still in prison in October of that year and it was reported that they were to be charged with sabotage. Other LCM members, Carlos Alberto Guzmán González and Novel Pérez Marero, were also reported to have been arrested during July 1995 (HRW/A, October 1995, 24).

#### References:

"Acusan al Disidente Hector Palacio Ruiz ante Comision Etica de Concilio Cubano," *Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba* (Independent Press Agency of Cuba, APIC). 3 July 1996 - as reported on *Cubanet* at <http://www.cubanet.org>.

Correa, Armando. "Expulsan a Líder de Concilio Cubano por 'Peligroso,'" *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 11 April 1997) - as reported on *Cubanet* at <http://www.cubanet.org>.

"Denuncia el Buró de Información de Derechos Humanos: Política Sistemática de Agresiones en las Prisiones Cubanas," *Buró de Información del Movimiento Cubano de Derechos Humanos* (Information Bureau of the Cuban Human Rights Movement). - as reported on *Cubanet* at <http://www.cubanet.org>.

Human Rights Watch/Americas. *Cuba: Improvements without Reform* (New York: October 1995), p. 24.

Tena, Ignacio. "Grupo Dice a Castro que Pedira Plebiscito," *El Nuevo Herald* (Miami: 10 October 1997) 0 as reported on *Cubanet* at <http://www.cubanet.org>.

Telephone Interview with Douglas Payne, Expert Consultant, INS Resource Information Center, 6 November 1997.

*Last Modified 06/14/2002*