



June 17, 2008

President Raul Castro Ruz
c/o Cuban Interests Section
2639 16th St NW
Washington, DC 20009

Your Excellency:

We, the **below-signed 1,355 individuals, join Human Rights First** in writing to express our deep concern about information we have received that Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, an independent journalist whose health has seriously deteriorated since being imprisoned in March 2003, has been discharged from the military hospital in Havana where he was receiving vital medical treatment. We understand that he has been returned to an isolation cell in Kilo 7 Prison in Camaguey and is receiving insufficient medical attention and very few family visits. We urge you to provide adequate medical care until his prompt release, and to cease other efforts to intimidate or human rights defenders throughout Cuba.

Normando Hernandez Gonzalez is a peaceful human rights activist and independent journalist whose activities are protected by international human rights law. His detention and excessive sentence is a violation of his fundamental human rights. Hernandez Gonzalez is one of 55 activists still held in Cuban prisons since the mass arrests of March 2003, and one of many non-violent prisoners held despite severe illnesses that are caused or exacerbated by harsh prison conditions.

On September 14, 2007, in a welcome step, prison authorities transferred Hernandez Gonzalez to the Carlos J. Finlay Military Hospital in Havana from Kilo 7 prison. His time in Kilo 7, and in Kilo 5 1/2 in Pinar del Rio before that, almost certainly caused his health to severely deteriorate, and vital medical treatment was needed.

While Hernandez Gonzalez and others remain in detention, we ask the Cuban government to guarantee that their conditions of detention conform to basic international standards as defined under the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the U.N. Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. These documents enshrine fundamental rights of detainees, including the provision that sick prisoners receive adequate medical treatment. These standards also protect the rights of prisoners to regular correspondence and family visits. Hernandez

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Gonzalez's return to Kilo 7 and placement in an isolation cell violates all of these principles.

We urge the Cuban government to immediately and unconditionally release Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, as well as all others held for their nonviolent promotion of human rights and democracy and the peaceful expression of their beliefs. We also urge the Cuban government to respect the fundamental rights of expression and association of all Cubans and to immediately stop the smear campaign, surveillance, and other tactics used to intimidate and disrupt the work of peaceful human rights defenders such as the Damas de Blanco.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We will continue to monitor these cases closely.

Sincerely,

The names of the 1,355 signatories have been removed for privacy reasons.