

I am writing this to express my grave concern for Dr. Ariel Ruiz Urquiola, who was sentenced one year imprisonment for contempt. He was a researcher of the University of Havana and has a long history of environmental activism and of publically criticizing Cuban authorities in relation to environmental issues. But he does not identify as a political opponent of the government.

His family believe that authorities have deliberately imprisoned him as reprisal for his environmental activism and as a strategy to deprive him of the state-owned land on which he runs his environmental project.

So I urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Ariel Ruiz Urquiola as he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

I also urge you to ensure that, pending his release, he is not ill-treated, intimidated or threatened; and that he is granted regular access to family and lawyers of his choosing.

Last but not the least, I urge you to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association including for critical voices and to repeal all legislation which unduly limits these rights.

Thank you for your prompt attention to the above.

Sincerely yours,