

## **Freedom for Detained Cuban Journalist**

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Calixto Ramón Martínez Arias spent half a year in jail without being sent to trial.

Cuban journalist Calixto Ramón Martínez Arias was freed on the evening of April 9 after spending six months in jail.

“I feel really good and really happy, and at the same time really grateful to you and to all those who showed concern with my situation,” he told this reporter online.

Interviewed by the *Diario de Cuba* news site, Martínez Arias said the authorities did not tell him why they were letting him go. He had previously been accused of insulting Cuba’s past and present leaders, Fidel and Raúl Castro, but no trial date was ever set.

“They didn’t explain anything,” he said in the interview. “They gave me a document allowing me to move about in the streets. It seems I won’t have to go to trial.”

Even when he was arrested last September, the police appeared reluctant to take responsibility.

“The policewoman who informed me of the charges against me at Santiago de Vegas police station told me that State Security had ordered my arrest and the process that should be applied,” he told this reporter. “It’s a game they play to make themselves seem innocent and to offload the blame onto others.”

Martínez Arias was released a day after he went back on hunger strike, the third such protest he had undertaken since his arrest in September.

On this occasion, at least nine other Cuban journalists and human rights defenders mounted hunger strikes in sympathy with their detained colleague and to press for his release.

“Thanks to everyone who was concerned about me – the press, human rights organisations, and activists,”

Martínez Arias also commented on his arrest at Havana airport on September 16, while investigating a story about a delivery of expired medicines arriving in the country. (See **Cuban Journalist Faces Charge of Insulting Castros** on the way the authorities went on to charge him with the serious offence of “disrespect”.)

“I saw them there – the workers showed them to me,” he said.

The real reason for his arrest, he believes, was that he had given unwelcome publicity to outbreaks of infectious diseases in Cuba.

“I was imprisoned because of the news articles I wrote about cholera and dengue fever,” he told *Diario de Cuba*.

His detention was condemned by Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and the Inter American Press Agency, as well as several western governments.

Reporters Without Borders welcomed his release, noting at the same time that “it must not divert attention from the continuing harassment of independent journalists and bloggers, and the fate of other detainees such as Luis Antonio Torres, a reporter for the official daily *Granma*, held since May 2011, and the writer Ángel Santiesteban-Prats, author of a blog called “Los hijos que nadie quiso”, held since 28 February.”

**Dana Sants is the pseudonym of a freelance reporter in Mexico.**

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