

**TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead protesting the sentencing of Armando Betancourt Reina**

July 27, 2007

Head of State and Government

Raúl Castro Ruz

Presidente interino

La Habana, Cuba

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Your Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to protest the 15-month prison sentence given to independent journalist **Armando Betancourt Reina**.

According to PEN's information, a Camagüey court sentenced Betancourt Reina, a reporter for the independent news agency Nueva Prensa Cubana, after a five-hour trial on July 3, 2007. According to the Miami-based news web site *Bitácora Cubana*, Mercedes Boudet Silva, the journalist's wife, said her husband was returned to the Cerámica Roja Prison in Camagüey, where he has been held for more than 13 months. Boudet Silva said that the time the journalist already served would count toward the sentence.

Betancourt Reina was detained on May 23, 2006, while covering the eviction of poor families from their homes, members of his family told the Committee to Protect Journalists. Local police told the family that the journalist was arrested for participating in a protest against the eviction, although sources in Camagüey said that the claim was untrue. According to Boudet Silva, authorities told her lawyer in November that Betancourt Reina would be charged with public disorder, but no charges had been filed until the trial.

With 25 independent journalists in prison, Cuba continues to be one of the world's leading jailers of journalists, second only to China. Twenty-two of these journalists were jailed in a March 2003 crackdown. Families and friends of many imprisoned journalists say that their health has seriously deteriorated in recent months amid poor prison conditions and insufficient health care.

**PEN Canada is seriously distressed by the 13-month detention of independent journalist Armando Betancourt Reina, and his subsequent 15-month sentence on false public disorder charges. PEN Canada calls for the quashing of all charges against Armando Betancourt Reina and his immediate and unconditional release. PEN Canada also calls for the release of all other journalists, writers, and librarians currently detained in Cuba.**

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

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Copies To:

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Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

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