

The first visit to Cuba took place between February the 1st and March the 31st, 2008. During this time, the APD team established contacts with the following Cuban dissidents:

Roberto de Miranda Hernández is a librarian and a released prisoner. While being imprisoned, Roberto de Miranda Hernandez could only be visited once for two or three months. Mr. Hernandez was not tortured, but the family felt like he was made sick by the hard regime within the walls of the prison. He developed a heart condition while being in prison. Due to his age and the hard regime as an inmate, he had to be released in order to remediate his worsening health condition. However, he could not benefit from a proper treatment because of the family's lack of money.

Mrs. Roberto de Miranda Hernandez is a member of Damas de Blanco Organization. This organization reunites all women that have a relative imprisoned by the regime on motives as freedom of speech and thought. The organization marches every Sunday on the streets of the city (photo) pleading for the freedom of all men in prison for the reasons mentioned above. Asked whether the police permit these marches Mrs. Hernandez said that usually the policemen abuse the women marching to stop their activity by shoving and easily hitting them. Lately this kind of abuse is not used so often anymore as the organization drew international attention on itself and the policemen would risk being exposed throughout the international press.

After all the bad things that the family had been through, Mrs. Hernandez declared that she could not imagine the same thing had happened in any other country too. When presented with the recent history of the communist regime in Romania she said she understood that bad things can only mean bad things, and the space and time of the action were irrelevant. She considered the Cuban people are tired of being forced into a life they did not want, but was still too afraid to do anything in that regard. They all had hopes for a change of the regime after Raul Castro had been appointed as the new president, but no one could clearly say there had been a change. Taking into account that the period of time since the change of the president is not long, one could only hope for better even though there were no visible signs of things getting better for Cubans.

Besides Roberto's needs for medicine for his heart condition, the family is always looking for books, both for children and grownups. The family arranged a room of the

house as a library for all persons who want to come in and read. Meanwhile, the house is rather a meeting point for all kind o people oppressed by the regime.

Efrén Fernández Fernández is a 75 year old cuban prisoner. He is married to Yamilé Velázquez Batista. Mrs. Velázquez Batista has not visited her husband the last three months partly because of the prison regulations, partly because of the lack of money. The woman declared she did not see any change since Raul Castro's appointment as president and partly did not even have hope for a change. She expressed her fear of the present regime and of the terror it had installed.

Mrs. Velázquez Batista mentioned that her husband had not been tortured in the prison. Meanwhile she complained about his health problems, which he developed since he had been imprisoned. She told the members of the team project that her husband did not engage in any activities in prison such as hunger strikes, writing etc. And, as she added, the prisoner's main need concerns medicines for his stomach illness as well as vitamins because of the weight loss due to the lack of proper food in prison. As for contacting her husband, it mostly takes place by phone calls and once in a three months period a visit to the prison.

Her monthly income does not exceed 20 USD, meaning the spending usually exceeds the income since the early days of the month.