



**National Democratic Institute**

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March 18, 2004

Dear Friend:

One year ago today, the Cuban government imprisoned 75 democratic activists. Many are organizers of the Varela Project, an unparalleled effort to advance peaceful change by calling for a referendum on fundamental political and civil liberties in Cuba. As Oswaldo Payá, coordinator of the Varela Project wrote about the jailed activists, "From the darkness of their cells, they are proclaiming the Cuban Spring and providing hope for all people."

International attention is essential to pressure the Cuban government to release these activists, in addition to the more than 300 other political prisoners, and for the protection of Varela Project organizers who continue to work for a referendum. Please find attached a statement from Oswaldo Payá calling for the release of all political prisoners and respect for human rights and peaceful change. We hope you will join us in sharing your concern about the continued repression in Cuba and the welfare of those whose only crime is to seek their fundamental human and political rights.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Wollack  
President

Sincerely,

Gerardo Le Chevallier  
Director  
Latin America and the Caribbean