

Cuba and Human Rights, a Member's Perspective

Steve Marquardt

IFRT and ALA members are invited to join an ongoing letter writing effort to request release of Cuba's imprisoned library workers, using the methods of Amnesty International, which has adopted all of them as prisoners of conscience.

American librarians' support for the release of these prisoners is indicated by 17 of the 21 current ALA Council candidates who replied positively to my own e-mail poll, by the strong applause for Andrei Codrescu's Midwinter keynote appeal, and by the 76% of the 609 respondents to the January 25 AL Direct poll - by a margin of 99, the most respondents to any AL Direct poll so far.

Amnesty, the PEN Writers in Prison Committee, Human Rights Watch and even the French Communist Party (see <http://www.pcf.fr/?iddoc=2567>), among others, have issued calls to release the imprisoned library workers, and we American librarians should join them. ALA in its IFC-IRC Task Force report adopted in January 2004 expressed "deep concern" but did not call for the release of those who attempted to exercise their freedom to read.

To turn this support and opinion into action, ALA members can join the librarians already on my e-mail list and receive sample letters for appeals to Cuban officials during National Library Week, Cuba's Librarians Day, Banned Books Week, Human Rights Day, and also in response to urgent crises in prisoners' health or abuse. Send an e-mail expressing your interest to me at CubaLibLib@gmail.com.

Steve Marquardt
Dean of Libraries
South Dakota State University
Box 2115, North Campus Drive
Brookings, South Dakota 57007-1098
605-688-5106
FAX: 605-688-6133

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