

Activist says 29 Cuban dissidents held

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HAVANA --

Cuban police have detained 29 anti-government activists in less than two weeks and seven remain jailed, including a man who called for the communist-run island to tolerate independent universities, a human rights leader said Monday.

Independent education activist Rolando Rodriguez was arrested last week after announcing that 5,000 signatures had been collected in support of autonomous universities in Cuba, said Elizardo Sanchez, head of the Havana-based Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation.

Sanchez, whose organization is not recognized but is tolerated by Cuban authorities, said the arrests come as government critics prepare to mark International Human Rights Day on Dec. 10.

He said the detentions began Nov. 21, when five government critics in Havana were detained by police without charges, then released. The rest were picked up in following days during subsequent roundups.