

Cuban activist: dissidents plan action

The Miami Herald
Dec. 06, 2007

HAVANA --

Recent detentions of dissidents, including a roundup on church grounds in eastern Cuba, appear aimed at deflating opposition plans for a march and other activities next week, a veteran human rights activist said Monday.

Elizardo Sanchez of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and Reconciliation told a news conference he believes "there is a campaign of preventive repression to detain any dissident act on December 10," which is International Human Rights Day.

Cuba's government has not commented publicly on the recent detentions, or opposition plans for Human Rights Day.

A column in the Communist Party newspaper Granma on Tuesday criticized international journalists in Havana for covering events by dissident groups, which authorities here dismiss as "mercenaries" funded by the U.S. and other governments to undermine state authority. American officials and opposition members deny the charge.

Recent detentions include the roundup of an unspecified number of dissidents on the grounds of a Roman Catholic church in the eastern city of Santiago on Tuesday, Sanchez said.

He noted that Darsi Ferrer, who plans a Human Rights Day march in a Havana park, claims to have received death threats from authorities warning him not to hold the event.

As part of observance of Human Rights Day, Sanchez invited international journalists to his home to see a modest display of photographs of political prisoners, as well as aerial views of some of Cuba's prisons taken from Internet sites.

Cuban dissidents commonly mark Human Rights Day with small gatherings and protests. American officials on the island have typically marked the day in recent years with a reception honoring Cuban opposition members.