

# PRISONERS OF faith

## Pastor Carlos Lamelas Country: Cuba

On the morning of February 20th 2006 five police officers entered the Lamelas home in Havana and searched it thoroughly before taking pastor Carlos Lamelas into custody. They also confiscated his computer, personal documents and several pieces of office equipment.

An ordained minister in the Church of God for more than a decade, Lamelas planted several house churches while pastoring a local congregation on the Isle of Youth. In 2004, while serving as President of the denomination's General Assembly, Lamelas moved his family to Havana. His troubles began soon after the move when Pastor Lamelas resisted what he considered inappropriate government interference in church affairs. At one point, he refused to sign what amounted to a loyalty pledge to the Castro regime and was reported to have openly criticised the Cuban government for curbing religious freedom, while preaching at several house churches.

Sources in Havana say that the allegations against Pastor Lamelas are spurious in the least and are part of a harassment campaign aimed at silencing a dynamic Christian leader. He has been jailed by the Cuban authorities apparently on charges of aiding emigrants who sought to leave the country illegally. Pastor Lamelas denies knowing the men in question.

A family man with two daughters, Estefania 12 and Daniela 6, and married to Uramis, Pastor Lamelas is being held at the Villa Marita Detention Centre in the Havana borough of Arroyo Naranjo. His wife is allowed to visit, but the visits are brief and closely monitored. Recently Uramis learned that her husband, who was initially denied contact with other

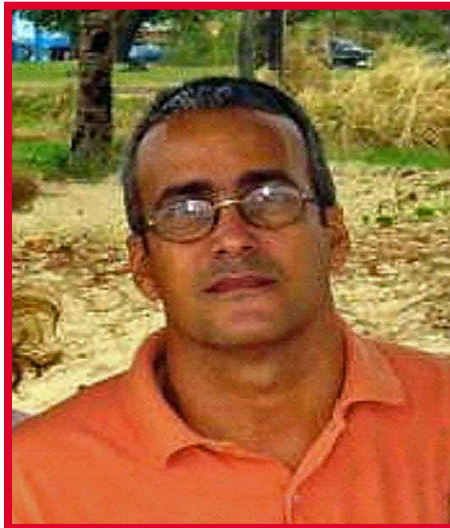
Through our international network of missions, Release International serves persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world by supporting pastors and Christian prisoners, and their families; supplying Christian literature and Bibles; and working for justice.

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**EMAIL ALERT**  
for prayer & action

**JUNE 2006**



prisoners, now shares a cell with five others. In the 12 months prior to his arrest Pastor Lamelas had twice been detained and questioned. Fellow pastors in different parts of Cuba have organised prayer vigils on his behalf and have offered their support to the family. The family have appreciated the help they have received and Uramis has asked for people to pray specifically for her husband and for the church in Cuba at this time. Pastor Lamelas's health has continued to deteriorate with his weight and blood pressure continuing to drop.

**PLEASE PRAY**

- ▶ For God to work powerfully in and through Pastor Lamelas at this time.
- ▶ For courage, safety and physical protection.
- ▶ That many will come to faith and grow in their faith as a result of what is happening in Cuba.
- ▶ For Uramis Lamelas and the two girls, Estefania and Daniela.

*'But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him'*

**Acts 12:5**

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THE VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Evangelical Christianity in Cuba is growing by about 6.5 per cent per year, yet the number of official Protestant church buildings has remained at around 1000, roughly the same that existed when Castro came to power in 1959. Because religion is not seen as a part of the ideal Communist society, the Cuban government has limited and discouraged its practice.

Many Christians in Cuba have found encouragement and fellowship in the thousands of house churches throughout the island. Some of these groups have grown to be very large, but in general, house churches tend to be small. There are reports of pastors being routinely questioned and detained for several days, but the spiritual movement continues unabated. Exact conditions inside Cuba's prisons are unknown as International Red Cross officers have not been allowed to inspect since 1990.

## **SEND A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

**2 Samuel 22:31 'As for God, his way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection' (NLT)**

Please send a card or short letter of encouragement to Pastor Lamelas and/or the family.

**When writing please do not mention Release International, or advance your political opinion or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities. Do not send money.**

Uramis Lamelas can receive cards or letters at the following address :

Uramis Frometa Salvat de Lamelas  
220 No. 6910 Entre 69 t 71  
La Lisa,  
Habana,  
Cuba

Or directly send a letter of encouragement to:

Carlos Lamelas  
La Villa Marista Detention Centre  
La Vibora,  
Habana,  
Cuba