

# *Father Michael Lapsley Considers the Cause of the Cuban Five His Own*

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Havana, September 3 (RHC) — Father Michael Lapsley, Vice President of the Council of Churches of South Africa, says that the cause of the Cuban Five is his own. Speaking Tuesday at the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, ICAP, Father Lapsley said that the three Cubans who are still arbitrarily incarcerated in the United States are not criminals but heroes “and their release from prison is our cause.”

Fernando Gonzalez, Vice President of ICAP, and Rene Gonzalez -- two of The Five already in Cuba after serving their sentences; Mirta Rodriguez, mother of Antonio Guerrero; Elizabeth Palmeiro and Olga Salanueva, wives of Ramon Labañino (still in jail) and Rene Gonzalez, respectively, spoke with Lapsley, who was a renowned fighter against apartheid in his country and is a great friend of Cuba.

The South African religious leader, who is also the founder and first president of the Friends of Cuba Society in Cape Town, South Africa, works in favor of the release of The Five and after a first meeting with Gerardo Hernandez — one of The Five -- in prison in 2003, he has visited him on another seven occasions.

Previously, Mirta Rodriguez and Elizabeth Palmeiro met with Marco Papacci, Vice President of the Italy-Cuba Friendship Association and head of the national campaign in the European nation for the release of The Five, and with Virginio Di Gregorio, a prominent Italian publicist and majority shareholder of the Gregor Company.

The Italian visitors will participate in the 10th International Colloquium of Solidarity with The Five and against Terrorism, to be held at Havana's Convention Center on September 11th and 12th. The meeting is part of the international campaign that will begin on Thursday with actions in Cuba, in the United States, and dozens of other countries.

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