

STATEMENT OF THE 10 PUERTO RICAN PRISONERS OF WAR

On April 30, 1981 in a continuing example of the U.S. government's repression against the Puerto Rican independence movement, U.S. federal agents secretly kidnapped Puerto Rican Prisoner Of War, Alfredo Mendez. Comrade Mendez, whose whereabouts are unknown, has been kept hostage for over two weeks, and with the full support of the Yankee judicial, correctional, and law enforcement departments continues to be "desaparecido" a disappeared person -- a form of repression not unknown to all people struggling for liberation in Latin America.

A grave concern for Comrade Mendez's safety is clear not only when we see his name and his credibility defamed by the slanders and lies perpetrated by Yankee propaganda, but more importantly in light of the recent C.I.A. ordered assassination of Puerto Rican Prisoner Of War, Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, while in federal custody in Tallahassee, Florida. Representatives and members of the Puerto Rican community, Comrade Mendez's immediate family, his legal consultants Michael Deutsch and Mara Siegel, and members of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners Of War, have been denied access to our kidnapped comrade.

We adamantly and in the strongest way possible condemn this criminal act of abduction by the U.S. government. Furthermore, starting today, May 18, 1981, we the remaining ten Puerto Rican Prisoners Of War, have initiated and commit ourselves to a hunger strike until the U.S. government ceases this hostage situation in the form of direct and free access to Comrade Mendez by his family, legal consultants, and Puerto Rican community.

The U.S. must guarantee his safety as well as his physical and psychological well being.

We state clearly, we will remain on the hunger strike until this situation is resolved, and Mendez's person is produced and free and direct access to him is afforded his immediate family, legal consultants, and members of the Puerto Rican community.

We also take note of the fact that today an emergency addendum to our petition for P.O.W. status has been submitted to the U.N. Human Rights Commission, requesting that an immediate inquiry be initiated into the whereabouts and status of Comrade Mendez. In this document we state that this is a highpoint in the U.S. government's attempt to destroy our unity and solidarity. Since our capture, we have been subjected to inhuman treatment which has included denial of proper and necessary medical care; interference and disruption of legal mail, and access to lawyers as well as legal assistance. We have been forced to work under conditions that have been injurious to our health; and singled out for special punitive treatment, including being placed in isolation on false charges of prison rule violations. Above all, we are denied a basic right accorded all prisoners, the right of access to each other as well as our supporters.

We urge all supporters of dignity and liberty, all justice-minded people, to actively condemn the action of the U.S. government and demand that it produce alive and well, Comrade Alfredo Mendez.

- The 10 Puerto Rican Prisoners Of War
May 18, 1981