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## CUBA | Reverend Threatened with Arrest

Rev. Alain Toledano, who leads the Emanuel Church which was demolished Feb. 5, has been threatened with arrest.

The pastor was told by the chief of police in Santiago de Cuba that charges are being prepared against him concerning the alleged illegal possession of chairs and supports for the roof of the destroyed church.

The police threats came after Rev. Toledano and a number of other church leaders held meetings Feb. 23 with regional Cuban Communist Party (CCP) and Ministry of Housing and Planning officials, to discuss the Feb. 5 events. According to Rev. Toledano, the First Secretary of the CCP in Santiago told the group that the belongings of the church would be returned and the question of the future of the property and the pastor's family home would be discussed with government officials.

At a meeting later in the day, government officials and the police chief contradicted the CCP official and maintained a harder line, telling the church leaders that the "Revolution had acted correctly," and the situation would remain as it is. They informed Rev. Toledano that a criminal case was being built against him and would be referred to a Revolutionary Tribunal.

Rev. Toledano, who belongs to the Apostolic Movement, a network of churches the government has refused to register, was out of the country attending a religious event when his church and home were demolished. He told Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) that shortly after his return Feb. 12, he was visited by six state security agents, who warned him not to hold religious meeting or to "go out into the streets."

He also expressed concern for his wife, who was dragged out of bed at 5 a.m., handcuffed and detained for the duration of the demolition, and his two young daughters, who witnessed their mother's treatment. He told CSW that all three are exhibiting signs of emotional trauma. "My daughters toss and turn all night and during the day they are dazed and fearful," he said.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are deeply concerned for the welfare of Rev. Toledano and his family, whose only 'crime' has been to lead a peaceful, growing church. We call on the United States and the European Union to raise this case urgently with the Cuban government, urging it to cease its harassment of this family and their church. We also urge President Obama to condemn the serious deterioration in religious freedom in Cuba when he visits the island in March and to continue to press for improvements in respect for human rights."