

## **Concern expressed about imprisonment of Pentecostal pastor**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg

Quito, Ecuador--Cuba's Roman Catholic bishops have expressed their concern to the government over the imprisonment of a Pentecostal pastor. The church leaders called on Cuban authorities to reconsider their decision.

In a statement, the Catholic Bishop's Conference said they had "expressed to the Cuban government their concern about the arrest and sentencing of Evangelical pastor Orson Vila."

"At the same time we ask reconsideration of the sentence to allow Vila to return to his religious mission," the statement said.

According to the Paris-based group Open Doors, Vila was arrested in May in Camaguey province for holding illegal meetings in his house and "insubordination." The group said Vila was sentenced to two years in prison.

Open Doors said that Vila had organized a house church of 2,500 members. The religious rights group said that Cuba's Justice Ministry had warned Vila and other pastors that they risked a jail sentence if they held the illegal meetings.

Cuban authorities have not commented on the case.

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