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Brazilian Government must defend the rights of Yoani Sánchez, Cuban blogger and all other dissidents, journalists and human rights activists

The news that Brazil has issued a visa for Yoani Sánchez, the Cuban blogger and human rights activist, to visit the country for a film festival is an important step in recognising her right to freedom of movement. The Cuban authorities must now grant her permission to travel to Brazil to attend the screening of a documentary by Brazilian documentary-maker Dado Galvão in Jequié, Bahia State, on 10 February. The film features the story of Yoani Sánchez and other bloggers.

Amnesty International is calling on the Brazilian government to intervene with the Cuban authorities so that Yoani Sanchez is given permission to travel freely to and from Cuba. On 20 January 2012 Amnesty International wrote to Brazil's Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota, calling on the Brazilian government to intervene in this case and to discuss human rights violations in Cuba. (see letter <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR19/001/2012/pt>)

President Dilma Rousseff will be visiting Cuba on 31 January 2012. Amnesty International urges her to raise Yoani Sánchez' case with the Cuban authorities as well as the issue of freedom of expression, association, assembly and movement which is of serious concern. The case of Yoani Sánchez and her visit to Brazil gives the Brazilian authorities an opportunity to engage on those issues with the Cuban government.

The Cuban authorities continue to severely restrict the freedom of expression, assembly, and association of political dissidents, journalists and human rights activists. Dissidents, journalists and human rights activists are subject to arbitrary house arrest and other restrictions to prevent them from carrying out legitimate and peaceful activities. In addition, the Cuban government is using the denial of exit permits as a punitive measure against government critics and dissidents.

Amnesty International trusts that President Rousseff will use her upcoming visit to Cuba to reinforce Brazil's increasing global influence in the promotion and protection of human rights.