

# URGENT ACTION

## CUBAN BLOGGER DENIED EXIT FROM COUNTRY

**Cuban authorities have refused blogger Yoani Sánchez permission to travel to Brazil to attend a documentary screening on freedom of expression. Amnesty International believes that this refusal is a punitive measure in response to her outspoken criticism of civil and political rights in Cuba.**

Cuban blogger **Yoani Sánchez** was informed by Cuban authorities on Friday 3 February that her application for an exit permit to travel to Brazil had been refused. She had been invited to attend a documentary screening on 10 February which features interviews with bloggers from Honduras and Cuba - including Yoani – on their experiences of censorship in their countries.

This is the nineteenth time since May 2008 that the Cuban authorities have refused to allow Yoani Sánchez permission to leave Cuba. The Migration and Immigration Directorate (Dirección de Migración y Extranjería) has denied her requests even though each time she has had a valid passport and valid visas to the destination. As on every previous occasion, Yoani Sánchez was not given a reason as to why her application had been rejected.

In her blog, Generación Y, Yoani Sánchez writes about daily life in Cuba and on the restrictions faced by the Cuban people to fully enjoy their political and civil rights. She has become one of the most prominent critics of the Cuban government, calling for an end to restrictions to the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and the freedom of movement within and outside Cuba.

In recent years various Cuban dissidents have been denied exit visas by the Cuban authorities to travel abroad in order to receive human rights awards or other prizes. Amnesty International believes that the Cuban authorities' refusal to grant Yoani Sánchez an exit visa is a punitive measure in response to the peaceful expression of her critical views and is an attempt to silence her voice on the international stage.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to issue Yoani Sánchez with an exit visa to freely leave and return to her country;
- Reminding the authorities that the right to freedom of movement is universally recognized under Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Cuba is a signatory;
- Expressing concern at the restrictions on freedom of movement that are being imposed on Cubans, particularly dissidents and independent journalists and urging the authorities to end these restrictions.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 FEBRUARY 2012 TO:**

#### Head of State and Government

Raúl Castro Ruz  
 Presidente de la República de Cuba  
 La Habana, Cuba  
 Email: [cuba@un.int](mailto:cuba@un.int) (c/o Cuban Mission to UN)  
 Fax: +53 7 83 33 085 (via Foreign Ministry)

**Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country**

#### Interior Minister

General Abelardo Coloma Ibarra  
 Ministro del Interior y Prisiones  
 Ministerio del Interior, Plaza de la Revolución, La Habana, Cuba  
 Fax: +537 85 56 621 (press send when the voice in Spanish begins)  
 Email: [correominint@mn.mn.co.cu](mailto:correominint@mn.mn.co.cu)

**Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

Yoani Sánchez  
[yoani.sanchez@gmail.com](mailto:yoani.sanchez@gmail.com)

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Yoani Sánchez has been invited to attend the screening of the documentary *Conexão Cuba > Honduras* (Cuba Connection Honduras) by Brazilian documentary-maker Dado Galvao. The film features the stories of a number of Cuban and Honduran bloggers who have faced censorship in their countries, including Yoani Sánchez herself. The screening is due to take place on Friday 10 February in Jequié, Bahia State, Brazil.

Cubans wishing to travel abroad must obtain an exit visa called a *tarjeta blanca* (white card). The process is a highly bureaucratic one and also very expensive for the majority of Cubans. The Cuban government also frequently uses the denial of exit visas as a punitive measure against government critics and dissidents. Yoani Sánchez and other outspoken critics of the government have been denied exit visas on a number of occasions. On 11 October 2009, Yoani Sánchez was barred from travelling to the United States to receive an international journalism award. She was also prevented from travelling to Spain to collect the 2008 *Ortega y Gasset* Prize for digital journalism. Guillermo Fariñas, an independent journalist, was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2010 but was unable to travel to Strasbourg after Cuban authorities denied him an exit visa. In 2005, representatives of a group formed by relatives and friends of the 75 people imprisoned in the March 2003 crackdown, the *Damas de Blanco* (Ladies in White), were not allowed to travel to receive the award. Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, one of the leaders of the Varela Project, was also awarded the Sakharov prize in 2002 and was not allowed to travel to Strasbourg to receive it.

Name: Yoani Sánchez

Gender m/f: f

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