



## UNJUST PUNISHMENT: CUBAN WIVES DENIED VISAS FOR NINTH TIME

Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva, Cuban nationals whose husbands are serving lengthy prison sentences in the USA, have for the ninth time been denied temporary visas allowing them to visit their husbands. Olga Salanueva has been told that she is now permanently ineligible for a visa.

The US authorities have denied successive visa applications from both women over the course of seven years. The reasons cited for the denials are based on claims that both women are threats to national security. Yet neither woman has faced charges in connection with such claims, nor has any credible evidence been produced to substantiate the allegation. Over the years, the grounds cited for denying temporary visas has varied, highlighting an inconsistency in the authorities' reasoning for prohibiting the women's visits to their husbands.

Adriana Pérez's latest application was rejected in January 2009 due to her status as "non-eligible" under the US 'Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002'. This legislation restricts the "issuance of visas to non-immigrant's from countries that are state sponsors of international terrorism".

*"I have lived in Cuba since I was born, yet this is the first time that US authorities have used this piece of legislation to deny me a visa. It is a paradox that the families of the other 'Cuban Five', who also live in Cuba, continue to receive visas in spite of this Act". Adriana Pérez March 2009*

Olga Salanueva's most recent application was refused on the grounds that she was deported from the US in November 2000.

The women's husbands, René González and Gerardo Hernández, are part of a group known as the 'Cuban Five' or 'Miami Five', who have been imprisoned in the USA since 1998. They were found guilty of "acting as unregistered agents of a foreign government" and related charges. Although some Cuban relatives in the case of all five prisoners have been granted visiting visas, they have experienced considerable delays ranging from a couple of months to two years before learning their applications were successful. Prior to her deportation in 2000, during René González's trial, Olga Salanueva had been living legally in the US. She was subsequently granted a visa to visit her husband in March 2002, which was revoked on 23 April 2002, shortly before her trip. In 2002 Adriana Pérez obtained a visa to visit her husband but was detained upon arrival in the USA and expelled 11 hours later.

Denying prisoners visits from their family in these circumstances is unnecessarily punitive and contrary to standards for humane treatment of prisoners and states' obligations to protect family life. The organization has urged that these restrictions be reviewed, drawing the government's attention to international standards that stress the importance of the family and the right of all prisoners to maintain contact with their families and to receive visits. In the case of prisoners whose families live outside the USA, indefinite or even permanent denial of visits from the prisoner's immediate family is a severe deprivation to the individual.

Amnesty International urges the US government to once again consider granting temporary visas to the two women for visitation purposes.

Amnesty International continues to review the case in consideration of the fairness of the criminal proceedings leading to the convictions of the five men.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO:**

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, THE U.S DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

- Call on the Secretary of State to overturn the decision that Adriana Pérez is “non eligible” under the US ‘Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002’.
- Urge her to grant temporary visas on humanitarian grounds to Adriana Pérez and to Olga Salanueva so that they may visit their husbands in prison in the USA.

**Secretary Janet Napolitano, THE U.S DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

- Call on the Secretary of Homeland Security to overturn the decision that Olga Salanueva is permanently ineligible for a visa.
- Urge her to grant Olga Salanueva a temporary visa on humanitarian grounds so that she may visit her husband.

**in both letters, please express concern that:**

- By denying temporary visas for visitation purposes, the USA is imposing unnecessary punishment on the prisoners beyond the constraints of their imprisonment, in contravention of international human rights standards.
- **Note that**, the families of all five prisoners have experienced considerable delays in being granted visas to the USA. **Urge** that such visas are granted to the families without undue delay.

*Please send copies of both letters to the Office of Cuban Affairs*

**ADDRESSES:**

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**The Office of Cuban Affairs**

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