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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

October 15, 2009

Mr. Jorge Bolanos
Principal, Cuban Interests Section
2030 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Mr. Bolanos,

I write to urge your government to reconsider its decision to deny Yoani Sanchez the permission needed to travel to New York on her U.S. visa, which is valid through February 24, 2010.

As you know, Ms. Sanchez was supposed to travel to New York to accept Columbia University's Maria Moors Cabot Prize, which is awarded for outstanding reporting on Latin America and the Caribbean. This prize is a respected international award in journalism. It is a particular honor to receive such a prize from Columbia University, one of United States' premier schools of journalism. The Maria Moors Cabot award committee provided special mention for Yoani Sanchez' work in founding and running the "Generacion Y" blog about life in Cuba.

Denial of Ms. Sanchez' exit request only serves to undermine Cuba's international image with respect to freedom of travel. We have seen public comments from Cuban academics, artists, and other public figures, voicing dissatisfaction over undue restrictions on freedom of movement of Cubans with valid visas to depart Cuba. My understanding is that while it is too late for Ms. Sanchez to attend the ceremony, which was on Wednesday evening, Columbia University would welcome Ms. Sanchez even if she were to come at a later date.

Again, I urge your government to reconsider its initial denial of Yoani Sanchez' application to travel to the United States.

Sincerely,



Kirsten E. Gillibrand

United States Senator