Stop the Delay, Grant the Families’ Visits

Elisabeth Palmheiro (far right, with her husband Ramón Labañino, their two little daughters, and Ramón’s oldest daughter Allí) has waited for months to be granted a new entry visa. Since Ramón’s imprisonment, Washington has granted the family permission to visit Ramón only six times in seven years. He is sentenced to life in Beaumont federal prison, Texas.

“The children are extremely anxious to see their father. They are growing up quickly without sharing enough time together. All summer long they waited to see him, and now school has started. I can’t tell you how sad they were not to visit him.”

The situation is repeated with all four of the surviving mothers of the Cuban Five. Mirta Rodríguez, mother of Antonio Guerrero who is sentenced to life in Florence, Colorado, has waited eleven months for the U.S. Interests Section in Havana to grant her permission to see her son.

It took 12 months before Irma Sehwerert, the mother of René González, received her visa to visit her son in September 2004.

U.S. Attorney General Alberto González has the authority to grant Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez permission to enter the United States, and to grant the families more frequent visits with their loved ones. Please support the campaign for the families’ visits.

Art by Antonio Guerrero

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“I Want to See My Daddy”

Seven-year-old Ivette, a U.S. citizen, has not seen her father, René González, for over five years.

Alberto Gonzales: Let the wives and children of the Cuban Five enter the U.S. for family visits

Who are the Cuban Five? Gerardo Hernández, René González, Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, and Antonio Guerrero, were railroaded and convicted in Miami federal court in 2001, on false charges of espionage conspiracy and related crimes. The real reason they are in prison? They were defending their country, Cuba, from U.S.-backed terrorist groups that operate out of Miami with impunity.

On August 9, 2005, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta overturned the Cuban Five’s convictions and ordered a new trial. However, in an unexpected decision, the 11th Circuit agreed to hear the U.S. Attorney’s appeal. Therefore the opinion granting a new trial has been set aside while new appeals are heard.

Five Men Wrongly Convicted

Meanwhile, the U.S. government is prohibiting wives of two of the Cuban Five entry into the United States to visit their husbands. Olga Salanueva, wife of René González, and Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernández, are law-abiding and productive citizens of Cuba who seek entry solely for family visits.

Two Wives Denied Visits

A Child Deprived of Her Dad

Seven-year-old Ivette González hasn’t seen her dad René for five years. She is a U.S.-born citizen, but because her mother Olga is denied entry, Ivette is also unable to visit him. In 2003 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, “It is reasonable to ensure that a visiting child is accompanied and supervised by those adults charged with protecting and serving the child’s best interests.”
“Olga and I are law-abiding and productive citizens of our own country. How could we possibly be a problem for the United States, where our husbands are imprisoned?”

Adriana Pérez

Our love grows every day.”

Adriana Pérez

Adriana Pérez is a chemical engineer. She works as chief of production in a food production/technology plant in Havana, with a master’s degree in the same field.

She and her husband, Gerardo Hernández, have been married 17 years, since July 15, 1988.

Six times the U.S. government has denied Adriana Pérez an entry visa to see Gerardo, arbitrarily deciding that she must be permanently barred from seeing her husband.

Thus, Gerardo Hernández, who was unjustly sentenced to two life terms, and Adriana, who hasn’t seen him for over seven years, are doubly condemned.

Adriana was subjected to cruel and unjustified treatment when she attempted to visit Gerardo on July 25, 2002.

On that day she flew to Houston airport, having been granted a U.S. visa.

On her arrival, she was detained by the FBI for 11 hours, isolated, deprived of her passport, photographed, fingerprinted, and illegally interrogated before being deported back to Cuba — without visiting Gerardo. The FBI offered absolutely no explanation to support its decision.

In April 2003, the U.S. government denied her a visa, invoking Section 212(a)(3)(A). It denies entry to those presumed to be agents intent on “espionage or sabotage ... or any activity a purpose of which is the opposition to, or the control or overthrow of, the Government of the United States by force, violence, or other unlawful means.”

The accusations of espionage are baseless and outrageous. Adriana and Olga have never acted against the USA nor harmed any national security interests.

Adriana’s name does not appear in any of the charges levelled against Gerardo or any of his four compatriots. If they had any such evidence, the authorities would have arrested him in Houston.

Adriana speaks of their separation. “We have been apart seven years, denied the right to have a family, and to share our private thoughts with a visit.

“The most important thing for us is family. We are very close to our families, and we cherish our many friendships.”

Adriana’s mother Abis, her father Alfredo and brother Armando, “support Gerardo and me very much.

“All I ask, for those persons who have influence in the United States, is to realize that we just ask for the right to visit our husbands. The U.S. authorities have the power to impose restrictions on us to enter the country, which is a serious object to me. I have every right to see my husband.”

Six times the United States government has denied an entry visa to Adriana Pérez. Thus, Gerardo Hernández, who was unjustly sentenced to two life terms, and Adriana, who hasn’t seen him for over seven years, are doubly condemned.

For refusing to plead guilty, his family is punished

Olga Salanueva Arango and Ivette González Salanueva

With a degree in business administration, Olga Salanueva has worked since 1978 in accounting and human resources.

Olga and René have a 21-year-old daughter, Irma, who is enrolled in university in Havana. Ivette, their 14-year-old daughter, is a U.S.-born citizen and was four months old when her father was arrested. She cannot see him because her mother is barred entry to the U.S.

Olga Salanueva and René González have been married 22 years. He was unjustly convicted and sentenced to 15 years in December 2001. René is currently in Marianna prison, Florida.

Olga has not seen him since August 16, 2000, when she was arrested and later deported by the INS. She and her children were living in Miami at the time of his September 12, 1998 arrest.

For two years after René’s arrest, no charges or claims were ever brought against Olga. That is, until her husband’s trial date drew near.

Her deportation from the United States was a veiled U.S. government maneuver: When her husband refused to plead guilty before trial, as “offered” by the FBI, René received a letter from the federal agents two weeks later, suggesting that the permanent resident status of his family could be revoked at any time.

In an act of intimidation, on August 16, 2000, Olga was handcuffed and driven to the Immigration and Naturalization Services to appear before a judge in a deportation hearing.

On the way there, Olga says, “They drove me to the Miami Detention Center where René had been held since two years before. They took me so he could see that I was in their custody, that he had one more chance to declare himself guilty, and then I could remain in the United States.

“It was obvious pressure on him and a threat to both of us. René said no, he was not guilty and would not plead so.”

As punishment, Olga was held for three months in INS jail, and deported from the United States back to Cuba, on November 22, 2000.

For Olga to appeal her deportation order, it would require staying many months in jail until a final INS determination. Fearing for their children’s safety while she and René were imprisoned, she had only one option — give up her right to appeal and be deported.

Now, only permission by U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales can gain her entry.

Olga was deported under the trumped-up accusation that she was engaged in espionage on the United States. Yet, René himself was never charged with espionage or espionage conspiracy.

“It has been five long years since we last saw each other.

“No family can function that way. It is only right that we as a family be together, even if only to visit each other in jail.”

Olga Salanueva, oldest daughter Imita, and René González

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