

JO STEVENS MP
Labour Member of Parliament for Cardiff Central



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon. Theresa May MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

5th July 2016

Dear Theresa,

**Subject: René González Schwerert : Visa Application Ref. GWF039889888
Gerardo Hernández Nordelo : Visa Application ref. GWF040246940)**

I wrote to you alongside a number of our Parliamentary colleagues on 26th February 2016 regarding the visa applications of the above named Cuban men who are due to meet with me and colleagues in parliament on Monday 11th July 2016.

We are now less than a week away from that meeting yet the Home Office have not issued visas. The delay will prevent the meeting in parliament from going ahead, undermining the rights of MPs to hear from Mr Gonzalez and Mr Hernandez, an issue which has already been the subject of a successful Court of Appeal ruling

Although visas for René González have been denied on two previous occasions, in November 2015 the Court of Appeal gave a unanimous judgment that the Home Office had acted unlawfully in doing so, and by denying the visa had made disproportionate interference in the rights of Members of Parliament to impart and receive information under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

If the government withholds the visas again, we have seen legal advice that you will be in violation of this judgment and acting 'unlawfully' by interfering with the rights of MPs to meet with Mr González and Mr Hernández. You will no doubt be aware of the judicial review hearing taking place tomorrow, 6th July.

The Home Office Visa Department say that the visa applications are 'complex' and that they need more time to make a decision, despite the fact that the visas were applied for more than 6 weeks ago.

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Since the case also raises issues of defending the rights of parliamentarians and the rule of law I have also written to your cabinet colleague, Justice Secretary Michael Gove.

At a time of improving US – Cuba relations and the recent visit of Phillip Hammond to Cuba this visit would be a positive development in UK relations with the island. The two men have travelled extensively in Europe and beyond since their release, including speaking at the European Parliament. There seems little reason to stop the men from travelling to the UK for a short visit.

I urge you to do all you can to urgently help with these visa requests and would be grateful to hear from you by return.

Thank you for your assistance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jo Stevens'.

Jo Stevens MP
Labour Member of Parliament and Shadow Justice Minister

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Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

5th July 2016

Dear Michael,

**Subject: René González Sehwerert : Visa Application Ref. GWF039889888
Gerardo Hernández Nordelo : Visa Application ref. GWF040246940)**

I enclose a letter I have today sent to your cabinet colleague, Home Secretary Theresa May, the contents of which are self-explanatory.

I would be grateful if you would discuss the unacceptable delay in issuing visas to Mr Gonzalez and Mr Hernandez and the importance of the Court of Appeal judgment with the Home Secretary as a matter of urgency.

Thank you for your assistance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jo Stevens'.

Jo Stevens MP
Labour Member of Parliament and Shadow Justice Minister

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