



July 13, 2010

Hon. Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are writing on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Association of University Professors, and PEN American Center to express our alarm over reports that prominent Colombian journalist Hollman Morris has been denied a visa to travel to the United States.

Mr. Morris has traveled to the United States numerous times in the past at the invitation of leading human rights and journalists' organizations interested in his experiences as a journalist covering the armed conflict in Colombia and his perspective on the political situation in his country. In 2007 he was honored by Human Rights Watch with its prestigious Human Rights Defender award, and he was one of 12 international journalists selected to participate in the Nieman fellowship program at Harvard University for the 2010-2011 academic year. The Nieman fellowship program is the oldest and most distinguished program for mid-career journalists in the world. It was in applying for a visa to attend this program that Mr. Morris was reportedly informed by a consular official at the U.S. embassy in Bogota that he has been found permanently ineligible for a visa under the security provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Earlier this year, our organizations wrote to thank you for signing orders effectively ending the exclusion of Adam Habib and Tariq Ramadan, two internationally-recognized scholars who had been barred from traveling to the United States by the previous administration. Professor Habib and Professor Ramadan were among dozens of prominent foreign intellectuals and writers who had visas canceled or denied between 2001 and 2008 to prevent them from assuming teaching posts at U.S. universities, fulfilling speaking engagements with U.S. audiences, and attending U.S. academic conferences. Deeply troubled by this resurgence in the discredited practice of ideological exclusion, we were gratified by your efforts to lift the ban on these two colleagues and hopeful that this signaled a willingness on the part of the Obama administration to end the practice of barring those whose views the government disfavors from the United States. No legitimate interest is served by the exclusion of foreign nationals on

ideological grounds. Ideological exclusion impoverishes intellectual inquiry and debate in the United States, suggests to the world that our country is more interested in silencing than engaging its critics, and undermines our ability to support dissent in politically repressive nations.

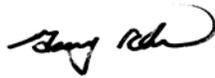
The recent news that Mr. Morris has been denied a visa runs counter to this administration's decisions in the Habib and Ramadan cases. Not only does his exclusion limit the ability of his Harvard colleagues and hosts to fully exercise their First Amendment rights, it also, by virtue of the reach and stature of the Nieman program, projects a particularly visible and troubling message—a message that clearly does not accord with this administration's stated commitment to fostering a free exchange of information and ideas between the U.S. and the world. We therefore ask you to review the exclusion of Hollman Morris as a matter of urgency, with an eye toward allowing him to join his colleagues at Harvard University in early September.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact ACLU Legislative Counsel Joanne Lin at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Anthony D. Romero  
Executive Director  
ACLU



Gary Rhoades  
General Secretary  
AAUP



Kwame Anthony Appiah  
President  
PEN American Center

cc: Harold Koh  
Legal Advisor to the Secretary of State