

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Names
2006		43	United States	Waskar Ari, Bolivian Aymara historian

*Announcement*

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) reports that Waskar Ari, an indigenous historian from Bolivia, was denied a visa to teach in the United States. We hope that you can send the recommended urgent appeals immediately. Please remember to write in your professional capacity. Thank you.

PS: For a comparable case, see NCH #38 (Nicaraguan historian Dora María Tellez)

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION NETWORK (AAASHRAN)**

**AYMARA HISTORIAN DENIED VISA**

20 March 2006

Case number: bo0603\_ari

ISSUES: Academic and scientific freedom; Right to travel

Visit the AAASHRAN website (<http://shr.aaas.org/aaashran>) to read this alert online and compose letters of appeal.

**FACTS OF THE CASE:**

An indigenous Bolivian scholar hired by the University of Nebraska at Lincoln has been unable to take up his post because the US federal government has withheld his visa. The State Department has given no reasoning behind the delay.

Last year, the University of Nebraska Department of History and Institute for Ethnic Studies hired Dr. Waskar Ari, a promising indigenous scholar from Bolivia, to teach Latin American History/Studies.

Dr. Ari is the first Aymara person to receive a PhD from a US University (Georgetown) and get a job at a major US research institution. Unfortunately, the US government has refused to grant Dr. Ari a visa to go to Nebraska and teach. His job was to have begun last August.

Although Dr. Ari submitted an expedited visa application in June, over nine months later his visa is still listed as “pending.” The university says it has not received any explanation from either the Department of Homeland Security or the Bureau of Consular Affairs. In the mean time, his existing student visa has been cancelled. Asked about the situation, a spokeswoman at the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs checked Mr. Ari’s file and said the cancellation of his old visa was done under a terrorism-related section of US legislation on the granting of visas. “We have derogatory information that renders him ineligible,” she said, but declined to add any further information.

Dr. Ari, a member of the Aymara people of Bolivia, is a scholar of the religious beliefs and political activism among indigenous Bolivians. He has served as a consultant on social and economic issues facing the Aymara with the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other organizations. In a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the American Historical Association wrote, “We recognize that there may be individuals who pose a genuine security risk... However, in Dr. Ari’s case, we feel there are no perceptible grounds for such treatment. Within the Aymara community of Bolivia, he is widely recognized as a voice of moderation” (the full letter and press release can be read at [http://www.historians.org/press/2006\\_02\\_13\\_VisaDenial.cfm](http://www.historians.org/press/2006_02_13_VisaDenial.cfm))

Last December, Bolivia elected its first indigenous president, Evo Morales, a leftist who has opposed US-backed efforts to eradicate the cultivation of the coca plant. Coca is the main ingredient in cocaine. Mr. Morales is also an Aymara.

In a similar case, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit last month challenging a provision of the USA Patriot Act that was used to deny a visa to Tariq Ramadan, a prominent Swiss Muslim scholar, despite his being appointed to a tenured professorship at the University of Notre Dame in 2004. In the lawsuit, the ACLU said the government was using the provision broadly to exclude from the United States people whose views it disfavors.

(Sources of information for this case include: Personal Correspondence from Dr. Patrick Jones, Professor of History at the University of Nebraska, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and The Journal Star.)

#### **RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS:**

*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*

Article 12(2): Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.

*International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

Article 12(2): Everyone shall be free to leave any country, including his own.

Article 15 (3): The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity.

Article 15 (4): The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and co-operation in the scientific and cultural fields.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Please send faxes, letters, or emails:

Requesting that Dr. Waskar Ari's visa be granted so that he can begin at his post at the University of Nebraska; and

Expressing your concern that the seeming arbitrary denials of visas for scholars appears to support arguments that the United States government is using visa denials or delaying the visa process to exclude people whose views it disfavors.

**APPEAL AND INQUIRY MESSAGES SHOULD BE SENT TO:**

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Secretary of State

Department of State 2201 C Street , NW Washington DC 20520

Fax: (202) 647-4000 (TEL)

Email: [secretary@state.gov](mailto:secretary@state.gov)

Salutation: Dear Madame Secretary

Mr. Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.

Assistant Secretary

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs Department of State, Room 6262 2201 C St. NW Washington,  
D.C. 20520

Salutation: Dear Mr. Assistant Secretary

Mr. Michael Chertoff

Secretary of Homeland Security

Department of Homeland Security Washington, D.C. 20528

Fax: 202-282-8000

Salutation: Dear Mr. Secretary

Ms. Maura Harty

Assistant Secretary

Bureau of Consular Affairs Department of State, Room 6811 2201 C St. NW Washington, D.C.  
20520

Salutation: Dear Ms. Assistant Secretary

**COPIES SENT TO:**

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Please send copies of your appeals, and any responses you may receive, or direct any questions you may have to Sarah Olmstead, AAAS Science and Human Rights Program, 1200 New York Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20005; tel. 202-326-6787; email [shrp@aaas.org](mailto:shrp@aaas.org); or fax 202-289-4950.

The keys to effective appeals are to be courteous and respectful, accurate and precise, impartial in approach, and as specific as possible regarding the alleged violation and the international human

rights standards and instruments that apply to the situation. Reference to your scientific organization and professional affiliation is always helpful.

To ensure that appeals are current and credible, please do not continue to write appeals on this case after 90 days from the date of the posting unless an update has been issued.