

The EXCLUDED

Ideological Exclusion and the War on Ideas



Ideological Exclusion and the War on Ideas

During the Cold War, the U.S. government routinely denied visas to foreign scholars, writers, and artists who were thought to hold leftist political views. The practice—sometimes called “ideological exclusion”—is inconsistent with the most fundamental American values, and Congress rightly put an end to it in 1990. But now our government is at it again, excluding foreigners whose only fault is holding political views that the Bush administration disfavors. The practice is unfair to those who are barred from the country and it violates the First Amendment rights of the Americans who want to meet with them. In this report, we profile some of the men and women who have been excluded.

A Discredited Practice

The framers of the Constitution wanted the United States to be a nation uniquely committed to the freedoms of speech and association. When the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, the freedoms of speech and association were enshrined in the First Amendment. James Madison, author of the Bill of Rights, later wrote, “a popular government without popular information, or means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both.”

Despite the First Amendment, though, the U.S. government has resorted to ideological exclusion in many different eras, and for many different reasons. Early in the 20th century, the government excluded advocates of anarchism. During the Cold War, it excluded suspected communists. During the Vietnam era, it excluded peace and anti-nuclear activists. Contrary to the principles of free speech, people were barred from the country not for what they had done but for what they thought and said.

For many years after the Second World War, the government was able to bar foreign writers and scholars by invoking the provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act. A law based on the premises of McCarthyism, one section of the McCarran-Walter Act allowed the State Department to exclude anyone who had engaged or had reason to engage in activity “prejudicial to the public interest”; another allowed it

to exclude those who espoused or advocated anarchism or communism. The law was closed-minded and xenophobic, and President Truman initially vetoed it, stating that “seldom has a bill exhibited the distrust evidenced here for citizens and aliens alike—at a time when we need unity at home and the confidence of our friends abroad.” Congress overrode his veto.

The McCarran-Walter Act was condemned by writers, scholars, artists, and civil libertarians. Critics saw the law as another tool of McCarthyism and feared that it would create an ideological litmus test and an impediment to the free flow of ideas. These fears were quickly realized. Among the many distinguished people excluded under the law were Argentine novelist Julio Cortazar; Palestinian poet Mahmood Darwish; British novelist Graham Greene; Pierre Trudeau, who later became Prime Minister of Canada; and Mexican writer and Nobel Laureate Carlos Fuentes.

The government’s actions were profoundly unfair to those who were excluded. Most of those barred under the law posed no threat to the country; they were excluded solely because of their beliefs. But the practice of ideological exclusion also harmed Americans. Americans who wanted to meet with foreign writers, scholars, and artists were prevented from doing so. They were prevented from meeting with some of the most important thinkers of the time, and they were denied the opportunity to hear new ideas and to engage these leading thinkers in discussion and debate. The State Department used the immigration laws as a means of censoring political and academic debate inside the country.

The ideological exclusion provisions of the McCarran-Walter Act quickly became an embarrassment to the country. More and more names were added to the list of those barred from entering. Colombian novelist and Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez; Italian playwright Dario Fo; British writer Doris Lessing; Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda. It became increasingly difficult for the U.S., on the international stage, to maintain that it was committed to the freedoms of expression and association.

The country's leaders gradually recognized that the practice of ideological exclusion was a disgrace and simply could not be defended. In 1977, Congress passed the McGovern Amendment, which prohibited the State Department from barring foreigners on ideological grounds unless they presented a national security risk. A decade later, Congress passed the Moynihan-Frank Amendment, which prohibited the State Department from denying visas "because of any past, current, or expected beliefs, statements or associations which, if engaged in by a United States citizen in the United States, would be protected under the Constitution." And the Immigration Act of 1990 reduced the grounds for deportation and exclusion from thirty-three to nine and turned the focus from beliefs to actual conduct. Ideological exclusion was thrown in the dustbin of history, which is where it should have remained.

“The very purpose of the First Amendment is to foreclose public authority from assuming a guardianship of the public mind through regulating the press, speech, and religion. In this field every person must be his own watchman for truth, because the forefathers did not trust any government to separate the true from the false for us.”

—Supreme Court decision *Thomas v. Collins* (1945)

Censoring Ideas Once Again

Over the last six years, the Bush administration has revived the practice that history discredited. Once again, our government is excluding foreigners not because they present any threat to national security but simply because they have espoused ideas that the government doesn't agree with. Once again, the government is focused not on conduct but on words, thoughts, and beliefs.

The list of the excluded is already long. Those who have been barred from the country include Swiss Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan; South African human rights advocate Adam Habib; Nicaraguan historian and activist Dora María Tellez; Bolivian historian Waskar Ari; Basque writer Iñaki Egaña; Greek economist John Milios; and British hip-hop artist M.I.A. All of them have been denied the opportunity to enter the country and engage with Americans. And Americans have been denied the opportunity to hear new ideas and engage with some of the world's leading thinkers and artists.

Some exclusions are being effected under Section 411 of the Patriot Act, which authorizes the government to bar those who “endorses or espouses terrorist activity or persuades others to endorse or espouse terrorist activity or support a terrorist organization.” Though ostensibly directed at terrorism, the provision focuses on words, not conduct, and its terms are broad and easily manipulable. In

“[H]ow can we presume to be ‘leaders of the free world’ and criticize the more egregious practices of other governments when we fail to live up to the standards we set for ourselves—that serve as a model for the internationally recognized human rights standards against which all nations are judged?”

— Larry McMurtry of PEN American Center,
in testimony before a congressional subcommittee

a manual given to U.S. consular officials, the State Department contends that the provision allows it to exclude those who have voiced “irresponsible expressions of opinion.” Do we really want consular officials deciding which opinions are responsible and which are not?

Over the last six years, dozens of foreign scholars, artists, and human rights activists have been denied entry to the United States not because of their actions but because of their political views, their writings, and their associations. We are once again living in an era in which the government uses the immigration laws as instruments of censorship. President Bush and senior members of his administration have contended that the United States is fighting a “war of ideas.” But it sometimes seems that what the administration is fighting is not so much a war *of* ideas as a war *against* ideas.

Ideological exclusion is raw censorship. To allow the practice is to allow the government to decide which ideas Americans can hear and which they cannot. It's a practice that skews political and academic debate in the U.S. and that deprives Americans of information that they have a Constitutional right to hear. It's a practice that Americans should reject. Now more than ever, Americans should be engaged with the world, not isolated from it.

“We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.”

— John F. Kennedy



Tariq Ramadan

A Swiss citizen who now a Research Fellow at Oxford University, Professor Tariq Ramadan is a widely respected scholar of Islam and a well-known advocate for Muslims living in Europe. In December 2000, *Time* magazine named him “the leading Islamic thinker among Europe’s second and third-generation Muslim immigrants.” An article in *Salon* called him “one of the most important intellectuals in the world.” An article in *Forward* called Ramadan “the most well-known Muslim public figure in all of Europe” and said that he had “used his prominence to urge young Muslims in the West to choose integration over disaffection.”

Ramadan regularly travels the globe, speaking to audiences around the world. He has taught at Oxford and former Prime Minister Tony Blair invited him to sit on a terrorism advisory committee, and yet Ramadan is barred from entering the U.S. In 2004 Professor Ramadan was offered a professorship of Islamic studies at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana. After accepting the offer, he obtained an H-1B work visa, packed up his home, and shipped all his family’s belongings to Indiana, where he had already enrolled his four young children in school. Just weeks before the semester was to begin, the U.S. government informed him that his visa had been revoked.

Ramadan was left in flux, unable to show up for work, his children’s belongings languishing unclaimed across an ocean. At the government’s invitation, Ramadan applied for another work visa, but to no avail. Rather than addressing the application, the government simply ignored it.

A government spokesperson later told the *Los Angeles Times* that Ramadan's visa was revoked under the Patriot Act because he had "endorsed or espoused terrorism." But, while Ramadan has been a vocal critic of some U.S. policies—particularly with respect to the Middle East, Ramadan has been a consistent critic of terrorism and he is known not as an extremist but as a reformist. On Sept. 13, 2001, he issued a statement calling on Muslims to speak out, condemn the terrorist attacks, and acknowledge that some fellow Muslims were betraying the Islamic message. He has called on Muslims to condemn radical views and acts of extremism; criticized those Muslims who do not differentiate between the political Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the "unacceptable temptation to reject the Jews simply because they are Jews"; taped lectures promoting women's rights and Islamic feminism; and spoken out against domestic violence, forced marriage, female circumcision and other forms of gender discrimination. Given his record, the accusation that he had endorsed terrorism was nothing short of bizarre.

In 2005, with the encouragement of several U.S.-based organizations—the American Academy of Religion, the American Association of University Professors, and PEN American Center—Professor Ramadan applied for another visa. When the government again ignored the application, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in on behalf of the organizations and their members. The lawsuit contended that the government's exclusion of Ramadan violated the First Amendment by depriving American citizens and residents of the opportunity to meet with Ramadan and engage him in face-to-face discussion and debate.

The government, forced to defend its actions in court, abandoned the claim that Ramadan had endorsed terrorism. But rather than grant Ramadan a visa, it contrived a new reason for excluding him—namely, that several years ago he gave small donations to legal European charities that had in turn given humanitarian donations to Hamas. The government does not contend that the charities were illegal or that Ramadan knew that the charities were supporting Hamas, if in fact they were. But the government's new reason for excluding him from the country, though transparently pretextual, continues to bar Ramadan from the country today.

Tariq Ramadan

“The U.S. government’s shifting arguments in my case might be absurd and even comical if the stakes were not so high. But, in the name of defending the country against terrorism, the government seems to be trampling over the rights that make democracies worth defending,” said Ramadan. “In a time when we are deafened by the daily rhetoric of ideologues and exclusivists merchants of fear, we are in dire need of engaged academics and public intellectuals who can write and speak authoritatively on the topics of the day and who also provide visible public models for ethics of citizenship.”

The lawsuit is ongoing and is currently before the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. While the suit proceeds, Ramadan is resigned to his exclusion.

“I am disappointed to be excluded from the United States,” said Ramadan. “But I am disappointed, too, that the United States government has become afraid of ideas and that it reacts to its critics not by engaging them but by suppressing, stigmatizing, and excluding them.”

Adam Habib

“The first time something like this happened to me, was during apartheid, in the struggle days,” Adam Habib said recently, recalling his detention at John F. Kennedy airport in New York City. Habib is a renowned South African scholar, human rights activist, and sought after political analyst. South Africa’s *Financial Mail* named him one of the country’s 300 most influential opinion makers. In the past few years he has also been an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy and the war in Iraq.

Professor Habib previously lived in the U.S. for three years, earned his Ph.D. from the City University of New York, and had traveled to the U.S. a half dozen times since September 11, 2001. He anticipated no trouble when he arrived at JFK airport on October 21, 2006, to attend a series of meetings. But when Professor Habib’s plane touched down, instead of joining his wife and colleagues outside customs, he was detained. At first, he thought it was the customary harassment he had come to expect as a Muslim. But Habib says, after five hours, he began to realize it was anything but routine.

His interrogators repeatedly questioned him about his associations and political views. For seven hours he said no to the government’s questions. Then he was asked if he had ever been questioned or interrogated before. Finally he could answer yes: he had been questioned in South Africa, during the apartheid regime,



Adam Habib

for speaking out against racism and abuse. U.S. government officials then informed Habib that his visa had been revoked, escorted him via armed guards to a plane, and deported him back to South Africa.

Three months later, the consulate called Professor Habib's wife, Fatima, and informed her that her visa and that of her two sons, ages seven and eleven, were being revoked. Habib's eleven-year-old son, Irfan, had been invited to attend a two week long Junior Ambassadors Program in the U.S., but he would have to miss out. There has been much speculation about the reasons that Professor Habib's visa was revoked, ranging from his addressing an anti-Iraq war rally in 2003 to racial profiling. The U.S. has recently denied entry to other South African Muslims, including Moulana Fazlur Raghman Azmi, deputy leader of the Jaitul-ulema Johannesburg, and Ismail Moola, a Durban Islamic teacher.

Over the course of the next year, Habib sought answers from the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria. He wrote letters to the Department of Homeland Security; South African officials and government bodies protested and made inquiries through diplomatic channels; and his employer filed an official complaint with the U.S. Embassy. Professor Habib finally received a reply from the State Department on February 22, 2007. Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Maura Harty wrote that his visa had been "prudentially revoked under section 222(i) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act as a result of the United States Government received, indicating [he] may not be eligible for the visa." The letter didn't explain the nature of the information but indicated Professor Habib could apply for another visa.

Professor Habib was again invited to the United States, this time to address the American Sociological Association's annual meeting in August of 2007. He submitted his visa application in Johannesburg in May 2007. The State Department website indicated that the typical wait for such a visa was 21 days and that even visas that required special clearance were usually handled within a month. From

Adam Habib

June until August, Professor Habib made regular inquiries about the status of his application. He was promised action by various deadlines but they always passed without word. On August 7, two days before Professor Habib was scheduled to speak, officials informed him that his visa was still pending and would not be processed in time for the visit.

In September 2007, Professor Habib and many of the groups who wish to meet with him in the U.S. in the upcoming year, including the American Sociological Association, American Association of University Professors, American-Arab Anti-discrimination Committee, and the Boston Coalition for Palestinian Rights, filed suit against the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department seeking the immediate processing of Professor Habib's pending visa application and a declaration that his exclusion without explanation violates the First Amendment rights of the organizations citizens and residents who wish to meet with him.

Professor Habib recently wrote about his visa denial on *huffingtonpost.com*, "Can you imagine if suddenly American academics and citizens were deported from South Africa because they criticized the government's policies on HIV/AIDS? If our governments get in the habit of excluding academics, intellectuals, journalists, and citizens of other countries for ideological reasons, then we are on a slippery slope to the abrogation of all kinds of freedoms. Having lived in apartheid South Africa, I know what this means."



Dora María Tellez

During the 1970s a political revolution to overthrow the brutal dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza erupted in Nicaragua. Dora María Tellez was a young member of the Sandinista resistance. At the ripe age of 22, she helped a group of Sandinistas occupy the National Palace in 1978. A year later, Dora Maria led a brigade into Leon; it became the first city to fall to the Sandinistas. Eventually Somoza was overthrown and Tellez was appointed the Minister of Health in the newly organized government of Nicaragua.

Professor Tellez is currently a professor at the Central American University in Managua and heads a reformist Sandinista party. Tellez has come to the United States many times, without incident, since she helped overthrow a dictator in her country almost 30 years ago.

In 2003, Professor Tellez was appointed Robert F. Kennedy visiting professor in Latin American Studies in the divinity department at Harvard University. She happily accepted the offer to teach during the spring semester and prepared to move to Cambridge, MA. She planned to teach a course on Nicaraguan politics and another on Caribbean identity. In preparation for her new job at Harvard University, Professor Tellez enrolled in English training classes at the University of San Diego and applied for a student visa.

The United States government denied Professor Tellez a visa on the ground that she had previously engaged in “terrorist activity.” Unable to travel to the U.S., Professor Tellez was forced to resign her position at Harvard.

Academics and writers throughout the United States have responded with disbelief and frustration. 122 members of the academic community from Harvard and 15 other North American universities released a statement in her defense arguing, “just as the State Department cannot affirm that the activities of Nelson Mandela against the atrocious dictatorship of apartheid in South Africa were terrorist activities, neither can it affirm that Dora María’s activities against the atrocious Somoza dictatorship were terrorist.”

The academic community is correct; the breadth of the government’s interpretation of the terrorism ground of exclusion is so broad that it could extend to those who provided support to the African National Congress during apartheid, the Kurdish uprising against the government of Saddam Hussein, or Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance. Yet, Jalal Talabani, a Kurdish guerilla leader who opposed Saddam Hussein, was welcomed into the United States with open arms in 2004. Steve Johnson, a Latin American analyst for the conservative Heritage Foundation, has pointed out that the U.S. regularly grants visas for former Colombian M19 guerillas, despite the fact that they killed judges. The one difference between Professor Tellez, Talabani, and the former Colombian M19 guerillas appears to be their respective positions on U.S. foreign policy. Dora María is a fierce critic, Talabani and the former Colombian guerillas are not.

The government has relied on bureaucracy to defend its exclusion, saying, “[a]ccording to our rules, we can’t let her in.”

“I think with the new Homeland Security rules, George Washington would have been denied a visa,” said John Coatsworth, director of Harvard University’s Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. “If we are denying visas for people

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Dora María Tellez

who are struggling against tyranny equally with people who are carrying out terrorist attacks ... we are making a terrible mistake.”

The end result is that the students at Harvard University have been denied the opportunity to learn about Nicaragua firsthand from one of its former leaders and preeminent scholars.

Yoannis Milios

In June 2006, Yoannis Milios, a Greek professor of economics, was headed to the State University of New York, Stony Brook, to present a paper entitled “How Class Works.” But after he arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport, Homeland Security officials detained him for eight hours, interrogated him about his political beliefs and associations, took his wallet and photocopied its contents, and ultimately put him on a plane back to Greece.

Professor Milios is a member of a Greek political party—called SYRIZA—and has run for parliament twice. He is a Marxist and has written extensively about class and economic inequality. He had been invited to speak at SUNY Stony Brook because American academics wanted to engage him and hear his views. Instead, the government decided to censor him and his ideas by turning him back at the border.

Milios, who had travelled to the U.S. on many other occasions, was surprised to be excluded. “Who is afraid of my research work and ideas? Why should overseas Marxist research not be discussed with American citizens in the USA? I am startled and astonished,” said Milios.

Milios’s story was front-page news in Greece. After returning home, Milios was summoned by the U.S. Consulate for a discussion about his exclusion. After an

hour-long conversation, which again centered on his political affiliations, Milios was told by the consular official that, while the reasons for his exclusion were still unclear, the exclusion might be connected with Milios's advocacy for prisoners who had been convicted in Greece for terrorism-related crimes. Milios had advocated that one such prisoner be released because of his poor health.

U.S.-based groups—including SUNY Stony Brook and the American Association of University Professors—criticized Professor Milios's exclusion back in the United States. The Director of Stony Brook's Center for Study of Working Class Life, Michael Zweig, issued a statement noting that he was “embarrassed to have to protest this unacceptable political intrusion into the flow of ideas and intellectual work across borders.”

To this day Professor Milios has not been provided an official reason for his exclusion and has not been permitted to enter the U.S. In a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Jonathan Knight, Director of the American Association of University Professor's Program in Academic Freedom wrote, “The government's barring entry of Professor Milios is one more instance...of the administration's seeming disregard for our society's commitment to academic freedom. As you both are aware, and as Secretary Rice well knows from her experience as a professor and administrator at Stanford University, opportunities for the free exchange of ideas among scholars are essential to the search for knowledge. Preventing these exchanges because of objections to the political activities or associations of participating scholars is at odds with this fundamental purpose.”

Waskar T. Ari

Waskar Ari, an indigenous Bolivian scholar, spent nine years living the United States while a student at Georgetown University. When he completed his degree in 2004, he became the first Aymara to receive a Ph.D. in the United States. The Aymara are one of the largest indigenous groups in Bolivia, who have only recently begun overcoming longstanding prejudices against them in their native country. Ari had dedicated his studies to the neglected history of indigenous Bolivians.

Waskar was an attractive job candidate: he had a strong academic record, numerous publications, helped to establish several indigenous grassroots organizations in Bolivia and Peru, and had worked as a consultant to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank on social and economic issues affecting indigenous Bolivians. When he completed his studies, Waskar received multiple employment offers from universities. He accepted a three-year position with the University of Nebraska and school officials began filing paperwork to expedite Ari's work visa in time for the fall semester. Ari headed to Bolivia for a ten-day visit with family and friends before he was to start his new position on August 15, 2005.

During his vacation in Bolivia, Professor Ari was notified that there would be delays in issuing his work permit. Concerned about the looming start date for



Waskar T. Ari

the fall semester, Ari immediately contacted the U.S. consulate to set up an appointment to discuss his visa situation. At the consulate, officials cancelled his still-valid student visas, telling Ari that they had been ordered to do so by the State Department.

Both Ari and faculty at the University of Nebraska began seeking an explanation from the State Department and Department of Homeland Security (DHS), but none was offered. While Ari's visa application had not been officially rejected, the government would not grant it either, and Ari remained in a state of limbo.

After nearly a year of silence, a clue was finally offered. An anonymous State Department official told the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that the cancellation of Ari's old visa was authorized under "a terrorism-related" piece of U.S. legislation. In addition, according to the *Chronicle*, some academics have speculated that the delay may have been intended to demonstrate displeasure with Bolivia's president, Evo Morales, who is also Aymaran.

While Ari remained in Bolivia, staff at the University of Nebraska resolved to hold his post open indefinitely. They also participated in a letter-writing campaign on Ari's behalf to the State Department and DHS, as did numerous other academic groups, organizations and scholars. In early 2007, the university filed a lawsuit against DHS for unlawfully delaying the processing of Ari's work papers. Four months after the filing of the lawsuit, Ari was not hopeful when he received a call from the U.S. consulate in La Paz in July 2007 asking him to come in and drop off his passport. When he returned later in the day to pick up his passport, though, the necessary work visa had been inserted. He received no explanation for this sudden granting of the visa, just as he had never received one for his prolonged wait.

Iñaki Egāna

Iñaki Egāna's 2006 trip to New York seems like something out of his book, *One Thousand Strange Stories from the Country of the Basques*. A respected historian, Iñaki writes and publishes books on the history and culture of the Basque people. Egāna was coming to the United States to conduct research for a book about his former coauthor, Mario Salegi. Both Egāna and Salegi had received acclaim for aiding in the rediscovery of Basque heritage in post-fascist Spain, but under Franco's regime, all manifestations of Basque nationalism had come under attack.

Salegi became an American citizen in 1944 and remained an outspoken proponent of the Basque nationalist cause which, along with his Communist sympathies, led to his persecution during the McCarthy era. After Salegi's death in 2005, Egāna was preparing to write a book about Salegi's life and he arranged to visit Salegi's U.S. archives.

In March 2006, Egāna flew from Madrid to New York with his two small children. Upon disembarking from the plane, he was immediately detained by police at John F. Kennedy airport. He was allowed one call and he alerted his contact in New York of what was happening. For the next twenty four hours Egāna and his children were held at the airport. Iñaki said that during this time his interrogators were frequently interrupted by calls from concerned friends and advocates, including the widow of Mario Salegi and Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY), seeking

Iñaki Egāna

information on his detention. After a full day in detention, Iñaki and his children were forced by authorities to board a flight back to Madrid.

Citing the echoes of the McCarthy-era persecution that Egāna was coming to the U.S. to research, the PEN American Center wrote to DHS, “For our...colleagues overseas, [Egāna’s] treatment and the lack of any explanation for his exclusion raises serious questions about the United States commitments to protecting freedom of expression and promoting the free flow of information and ideas.”

PEN protested Egāna’s exclusion and demanded an explanation. None has ever been given.

M.I.A.

With lyrics like “I got the bombs to make you blow/I got the beats to make you bang bang bang/Pull up the people/Pull up the poor” set against hip hop, reggae, disco, and pop beats, M.I.A. set herself apart from other contemporary recording artists by infusing the growing genre of grime with distinctly intellectual and political lyrics. Born in the United Kingdom but raised in her family’s native Sri Lanka, M.I.A., born Mathangi “Maya” Arulpragasam, saw little of her father. He was a Tamil separatist and spent much of Maya’s childhood in hiding from the Sri Lankan Army. When the eleven-year-old returned to London with the rest of her family, her father remained in the civil war-torn country.

Back in the U.K., M.I.A. learned English by listening to the radio. After designing album covers for bands like Elastica and filming various musical groups on tour, M.I.A. began creating music of her own. Her work on the 2004 mix tape *Piracy Funds Terrorism* made her a huge internet celebrity who sold-out shows across the United States before she had even released a full-length album.

Her debut, *Arular*, came out in March 2005 to tremendous critical acclaim. Her songs dealt with everything from cultural identity to revolution, and almost immediately prompted controversy when MTV banned one of her earliest videos, “Sunshowers,” because it contained the lyric “Like PLO, I don’t surrender.” Despite the controversy, *Arular* was nominated for the Mercury Prize, the prestigious annual British music award.

M.I.A.

The success of *Arular* led to collaborations with artists like Timbaland, Missy Elliot, and Kanye West. In April 2006, M.I.A. prepared to return to the U.S., where she maintains a home, to work on a new album. This time, however, immigration officials refused to issue a visa for work or visiting purposes. Although no explanation was given, it was widely speculated in the media that the denial was due to the content of M.I.A.'s lyrics.

Professionally an enormous amount is at stake for artists who cannot travel to the states. The inability to work with artists and producers in the U.S. music industry, and to tour in the country where she enjoys huge popularity, would have been a disastrous blow to M.I.A.'s career.

After many months of unanswered inquiries, M.I.A. was finally granted a visa in July 2007. The government still has not explained its earlier refusal to grant a visa.

RECENT IDEOLOGICAL EXCLUSIONS

DR. HALUK GERGER

Turkish journalist, writer, and political scientist

Oct. 1, 2002

JOHN CLARKE

Canadian Organizer for the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

February 2002; Spring 2004

CARLOS ALZUGARAY TRETO

Cuban Scholar and Former Ambassador to the European Union

2003

SHEIKH AHAMAD KUTTY and SHEIKH ABDOOL HAMID

Canadian Muslim clerics

September 11, 2003

KARIM MEZIANE

Physicist

September 2004

TARIQ RAMADAN

Islamic Scholar and Author

July 2004

61 CUBAN SCHOLARS

October 2004

ROLAND SIMBULAN

Filipino Professor, National Chairman, Nuclear-Free Philippines Coalition (NFPC)

October 2004

DORA MARIA TELLEZ

Nicaraguan Scholar and Former Minister of Health
January 2005

KALBE SADIQ

Indian Shia Cleric and vice-president of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board
March 17, 2005

FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ

Bolivian Human Rights Lawyer
March 2005

MIRZA MOHAMMED ATHAR

Indian Shia Cleric, Chief of All India Shia Personal Law Board
June 2005

VICENTE VEREZ-BENCOMO

Cuban scientist
November 2005

YAHYA IBRAHIM

Canadian Islamic Scholar (teaching in Australia)
December 19, 2005

WASKAR ARI

Bolivian Aymara Indian Scholar
Expedited H1-B visa application pending since June 2005
Student visa was cancelled by State Dept as H1-B was pending

LEONIDA ZURITA VARGAS

Bolivian Adjunct/Alternate Senator Leonida Zurita Vargas, Coca farmer leader
February 20, 2006

JOSE BOVE

French Activist/Farmer
February 2006

59 CUBAN ACADEMICS

Denied visas for March 2006 conference

RENÉ ORELLANA

Bolivian Vice Minister of Water

April 2006

M.I.A. (Maya Arulpragasam)

British Hip Hop Artist

Around April 2006

IÑAKI EGAÑA

Basque historian, publisher and writer

March 26, 2006

74 SOUTH KOREAN ACTIVISTS

June 2005

ZAKI BADAWI

Egyptian Islamic scholar and community activist

July 13, 2005

20 IRANIAN PROFESSORS

August 4, 2006

MOHAMMED SALAMA

Professor of Comparative Literature and Arabic

June 20, 2006

SAIF AL SHA'ALI

Doctoral Student at Claremont University

Aug. 23, 2006

FOUR EGYPTIAN MUSLIM CLERICS

Hamdi Salama, Ayman Al Wahab, Sami Faraj, and Zain Alabedeen

Sept. 20, 2006

PURSHOTTAM RUPALA

Aide to Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Bharatiya Janata Party spokesman
Aug. 23, 2006

KAMAL HELBAWY AND ABDEL MONEM ABOU EL FOTOUH

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood
Oct. 18, 2006

FAZLUR RAHMAN AZMI

South African Muslim Cleric
Oct. 20, 2006

ISMAIL MULLAH

South African Imam
Sept. 22, 2006

ADAM HABIB

Executive Director of Human Sciences Research Council
Oct. 21, 2006

PAK GIL-YON and KIM MYONG-GIL

North Korean ambassador to the United Nations
Nov. 2006

MAHMOUD ZEITOUN

Canadian University Student
March 15, 2007

RIYADH LAFTA

Iraqi medical professor and epidemiologist
April 20, 2007