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CUBA Government backtracks on verbal assurances to grant exit visa to pastor

Pastor Omar Gude Perez has so far been denied a visa to leave Cuba in order to seek asylum the United States (US) despite verbal assurances from Cuban authorities that his application would be approved.

Pastor Gude Perez's wife and two children have been given exit visas, or "white cards", as they are called in Cuba, but the family has refused to leave Cuba without him, for fear that delays in the pastor's visa application may lead to a long-term separation.

Since the family was granted asylum by the US in July 2010, they have had to wait several months for their exit visas to be approved, and have been subject to contradictory messages from the authorities on whether the family will be able to leave Cuba together.

Pastor Gude, a national leader in a fast growing network of independent churches called the Apostolic Movement, served almost three years of a six-and-a-half year prison sentence on trumped up charges. His release was subject to certain conditions, namely that he was prohibited from preaching or from travelling outside the city of Camaguey.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "CSW is deeply concerned at the failure of Cuban officials to honor verbal assurances to grant Pastor Omar Gude Perez an exit visa. The Gude family has been waiting for the whole family to be granted exit visas for more than six months, and do not want to be forced to separate. We call on the Cuban government to honor its promise to the Gude family and grant Pastor Gude Perez an exit visa so that he and his family can begin a new life in the United States together without any further delay."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Apostolic Movement is a non-denominational, Charismatic, Protestant network of church groups which are outside of the traditionally recognized Christian denominations in Cuba. CSW has documented intense government persecution of church leaders linked to the network over the past three years, detailed in our annual report on religious freedom in Cuba, [available here](#) in Spanish and in English.