

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 18, 2011

Mr. Christopher J. Richard
Consul General
United States Embassy Islamabad
Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5
Islamabad, Pakistan

Dear Consul General Richard,

We are writing in reference to the B-2 nonimmigrant visa application of Ms. Malalai Joya. Ms. Joya is a prominent women's rights activist and a former member of the Afghan parliament. She was scheduled to come to the United States on March 20, 2011, but her visa request was denied. We respectfully ask for a second meeting with Ms. Joya for a full reconsideration.

On March 20, Ms. Joya was scheduled to begin a three-week U.S. tour to discuss an updated edition of her memoir, *A Woman Among Warlords*. In 2010, Ms. Joya was named one of TIME magazine's 100 most influential people in the world and is widely regarded as a rare symbol of hope for Afghanistan's future. Ms. Joya's memoir has been translated into over a dozen languages, and she has toured widely including Australia, the UK, Canada, Norway, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, and the Netherlands in support of the book over the past two years. Events featuring Malalai Joya are planned from March 20 until April 10 in New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington and California.

Ms. Joya has visited the United States before and has always gone back to Afghanistan, despite the risks and threats she faces at home. Ms. Joya's ties to her country of residence are strong and it is our understanding that she has no intention of staying in the United States beyond the period of time that covers her speaking engagements.

We were therefore distressed to learn that the reason for the denial of visa was that she is "unemployed" and "lives underground." Ms. Joya's activism in Afghan politics and her conviction to stand up against warlords and fundamentalists in Afghanistan have resulted in five assassination attempts. Despite these challenges, Ms. Joya has continued her efforts to be a courageous voice in a world where women's voices are brutally suppressed.


We respectfully request a full reconsideration of Ms. Joya's visa application. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



JIM McDERMOTT
U.S. Representative


PATRICK LEAHY
U.S. Senator


JAY INSLEE
U.S. Representative


PATTY MURRAY
U.S. Senator



KEITH ELLISON
U.S. Representative


BERNARD SANDERS
U.S. Senator


PETER WELCH
U.S. Representative


BILL PASCRELL
U.S. Representative

Name on Passport: Malaalay Joya
Date of birth: 24/04/1978
Passport number: OA278679
Visa application number: AA00196V1F
Location of Interview: U.S. Embassy Islamabad


BETTY McCOLLUM
U.S. Representative

cc: The Honorable Cameron Munter, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan