



10.6.17

CUBA | Charges Dropped Against Activist

Félix Yuniel Llerena López, a religious freedom activist, was informed Oct. 2 that criminal charges against him were dropped by Cuban state security, and that he is allowed to travel abroad again.

Llerena López is the Central Region Coordinator for the Patmos Institute, an independent civil society organization which promotes freedom of religion or belief and inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. The 20-year-old activist had been interrogated by state security agents on April 27 upon arrival at the Abel Santamaria International Airport in Santa Clara as he returned from an advocacy visit to the United States.

On April 28, Llerena López was detained by state security agents, threatened and forced to sign an “Acta de Advertencia” or pre-arrest warrant for public disorder.

He was later expelled from the Enrique José Varona Pedagogical University in Havana, ostensibly due to excessive absences from classes within the last month. Llerena López has stated he had not registered the number of absences which would justify such action and that the real reason behind his expulsion is his human rights activism.

“After five months of opposition, arrests, being expelled from University, intimidation, threats and a false accusation, today I can say that solidarity [and] the dignity of not giving up on principles [...] triumphed,” he told CSW.

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “While we welcome the criminal case against Félix Yuniel Llerena López being dropped, and the lifting of the ban on his international travel, we believe that these measures should not have been brought against him. We continue to call on the Cuban government to cease its harassment of human rights defenders and to turn its attention to addressing ongoing violations of freedom of religion or belief.”