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Please Halt the Deportation of Haitian Refugees

1 message

Emily Breslin <emilybreslin@gmail.com>

Wed, Mar 16, 2011 at 10:46 AM

To: haitipolicycomments@dhs.gov

Cc: Felicia_Escobar@who.eop.gov, comments@whitehouse.gov

Bcc: haitideportationsletters@gmail.com

To whom it may concern:

This email is to express my vehement opposition to the deportation of Haitian refugees at this time. Many international human rights organizations have unequivocally stated that conditions are worse now than they were after the earthquake struck. The deportation of displaced people at this time is illegal, as it violates our international law commitments regarding the rights of refugees. It is also immoral, as it amounts to a death sentence for many individuals.

It is my understanding that there are statutory mechanisms, such as Temporary Protected Status, to allow individuals to stay in the United States until conditions in their home country improve. I do not understand why the United States government is not extending protection to Haitian refugees until the conditions in Haiti are at least elevated to basic human standards of living. I fail to see the great harm that would result to the American people as a whole if refugees were granted an additional 6 months or a year to reside here. On balance, this extra time could save the lives of many people.

As far as which individuals the United States is deporting, I am unconcerned with whether they are virtuous people, or whether they have made some mistakes. International law does not condition basic human rights on whether people are "good," but simply whether they are human beings.

At the end of the day, the United States should not forget the spirit of these words, welcoming our ancestors and building a new nation:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, the tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

I understand the importance of ensuring that U.S. immigration laws are efficacious, and respected. I do not envy the task of enforcement, as I am sure it is daunting. However, as an economically fortunate nation, and a compassionate society, and I am outraged and saddened that the U.S. government has chosen to pursue a policy that flies in the face of basic human rights, common sense, and baseline morality.

Sincerely,

Emily Breslin

Facts in support of my letter:

NO ONE should be deported to Haiti at this time. The conditions that deportees will face have already caused a death and could amount to a death sentence for other deportees.

- Haitian deportees are subjected to horrific detention conditions once they arrive in Haiti. Cholera is widely present in Haitian police station holding facilities and lack of functioning toilets, crowded conditions and other factors make contracting cholera more likely. These conditions led to the tragic death of Wildrick Guerrier, who was deported by the US on January 20.
 - Conditions in Haiti are dire; 1.5 million Haitians remain homeless and living in tents or under tarps in and around Port au Prince. Lack of food, water, and other necessities is an ongoing crisis throughout Haiti. The cholera epidemic has infected more than 231,000 people and claimed approximately 4,500 lives, so far. No one should be deported into these conditions.
 - Deportations to Haiti violate basic American values and human rights standards such as the right to life, the right to family integrity and due process. See our petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) <http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/current-cases/iachr-haitian-removals>, and IACHR's decision <http://www.cidh.oas.org/Comunicados/English/2011/6-11eng.htm>.
 - ICE's characterization that the deportees are "the worst of the worst" is dishonest. Some of the deportees are convicted of minor drug offenses or misdemeanors; others did not even receive jail time in the US. ICE's claim that it needed to resume deportations because it could no longer legally hold these men and women in detention is also misleading. Most of those currently facing deportation were Haitians who had served their time years ago and were living law abiding lives in their communities as legal residents in the US and who were suddenly and unexpectedly rounded up before the holidays in December.
 - Many of those awaiting deportation have family members, including dependent children, who are US citizens in the US. Many deportees lack family or any loved ones in Haiti. Those awaiting deportation and recent deportees have stated that they fear for their survival.
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