

African American Ministers In Action (AAMIA) ☐ American Jewish Committee ☐ American Jewish World Service ☐ Church World Service ☐ Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ) ☐ The Episcopal Church ☐ Friends Committee on National Legislation ☐ Gender Action ☐ Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society ☐ Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti ☐ Jesuit Refugee Service/USA ☐ Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service ☐ Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office ☐ Mennonite Church USA ☐ Muslim Public Affairs Council ☐ The National Advocacy Center Sisters of the Good Shepherd ☐ NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby ☐ Partners In Health ☐ Refugees International ☐ Sisters of Mercy of the Americas ☐ Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations ☐ Unitarian Universalist Service Committee ☐ United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries ☐ United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society ☐ UNITED SIKHS ☐ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops ☐ World Relief

February 11, 2011

Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Madam Secretary:

As faith-based and humanitarian organizations, we write to express our opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) recent decision to resume deportations to Haiti. One week after the United States deported 27 Haitians, deportee Wildrick Guerrier has died. After being placed in a Haitian jail, Guerrier, 34, a long-time U.S. resident, began to suffer from cholera-like symptoms. He died shortly thereafter, leaving family in the U.S. to mourn his loss. At least one other Haitian detainee shows similar symptoms and had to be transferred to an already overburdened medical center for treatment.

The death of Mr. Guerrier proved an unfortunate point that humanitarian and faith-based organizations had raised with DHS before the January 20 deportation was executed: That deportations to Haiti at this time may amount to a death sentence, as Haiti is wholly unprepared to absorb the population and guarantee the protection of their human rights. We are alarmed to hear that even following this tragedy, DHS is planning to deport another group of Haitians, perhaps as early as this week. Now is not the time to resume deportations to Haiti, nor would it be morally or politically appropriate to do so in the foreseeable future. To continue deportations in the face of such conditions would represent a knowing disregard for the life and dignity of the Haitians scheduled for deportation.

**We ask that you cease these deportations immediately.**

Many of our organizations had expressed our concerns about the resumption of deportations of Haitians at a time when Haiti is still struggling to recover from a devastating earthquake. Mr. Guerrier's untimely death proves that Haiti is unable to provide for the safe and dignified reintegration of deportees. Not only are the lives of deported Haitians at risk, deportations could divert critical resources from Haiti's recovery and reconstruction effort.

Of the 27 Haitians already deported and another 300 who await deportation, there are a significant number with low-level, non-violent criminal convictions who had already been released and had been living in the community without incident for years. Others have compelling humanitarian situations, including serious medical conditions or potential claims for immigration relief.

DHS has stated that it intends to deport 700 Haitians by October. Yet, a cholera outbreak has claimed over 3,600 lives and infected more than 400,000. Reconstruction continues at a slow pace, with hundreds of thousands still living in tent cities. To compound these issues, Haiti's jails, in

which the Haitian government routinely holds deportees and which are notorious for the inhumane treatment of detainees, are now rife with cholera.

In addition to immediately halting all deportations, the United States can take additional steps to reiterate its commitment to help Haiti recover. This would include:

- 1) A re-designation of TPS for Haiti so that Haitians who entered the U.S. after the earthquake may access its benefits;
- 2) Humanitarian parole for immediate family members of Haitians evacuated to the United States for medical purposes after the earthquake; and
- 3) The implementation of a family reunification parole program that would benefit 55,000 Haitians with approved family petitions into the United States as they wait for their priority dates to become current.

We believe that these measures would alleviate an otherwise inevitable worsening of the social and economic strains on the stricken nation, facilitate the reunification of Haitian families, and ensure that sorely-needed remittances flow to the country. The adoption of these measures would also send an important signal to the Haitian people that the United States remains committed to their long-term welfare.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Honorable Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State  
Melody Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council  
Denis McDonough, Deputy National Security Advisor, National Security Council

John Morton, Director, Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
Alejandro Mayorkas, Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service