

African American Ministers in Action

AJC (American Jewish Committee)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Bread for the World Institute

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Church World Service (CWS)

Disciples Justice Action Network

The Episcopal Church

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

Islamic Information Center

The Immigration Issues Offices of the Presbyterian Church USA

Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ)

Irish Apostolate USA

Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA)

Jesuit Refugee Service

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

Muslim Public Affairs Committee

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK

Pax Christi USA

RAC (The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism)

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Sojourners

3D Security

Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA)

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

UNITED SIKHS

World Relief



March 11, 2011

To: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Re: Policy for Resumed Removals to Haiti

As members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, we find the proposed "Policy for Resumed Removals to Haiti" problematic for several reasons. Specifically:

- **Haiti is ill-prepared at this time to accept deportees of any kind.** Neither the U.S. Department of State nor the Government of Haiti has a viable reintegration plan or the resources available to enact such a plan. Several Haitian officials have stipulated that Haiti is currently unable to safely absorb a deported population. Deportations divert critical resources from Haiti's recovery and reconstruction effort. An estimated one million Haitians are still homeless. Over 4,000 have died from cholera.
- **Deportation can be a death sentence.** One of those deported in January has already died, likely from cholera. Haiti's jails, in which the Haitian government routinely holds deportees, are notorious for the inhumane treatment of detainees. Cholera is widely present and the lack of functioning toilets, crowded conditions and other factors make contracting cholera more likely. Reports have confirmed that many of the Haitian deportees who were released from prison are currently living in the camps of Port-au-Prince, placing further strain on resources aimed at Haiti's recovery.
- **Persons with non-violent, low level convictions are deported into these horrific conditions.** Many of those already deported were convicted of minor drug offenses or misdemeanors; others did not even receive jail time in the U.S. Others had served their time years ago and were living law abiding lives in their communities as legal residents in the U.S. While the proposed policy states that future removals will be limited to "serious offenders such as violent felons" it concludes with a list that includes drug convictions and other non-violent crimes.
- **Alternatives to deportation exist, in order to protect public safety.** Many of those facing deportation had been living without incident in their home communities before they were unexpectedly rounded up and detained. ICE has robust supervision and electronic monitoring programs that it routinely uses to monitor noncitizens with criminal backgrounds who cannot be deported—including people from Cuba and other countries to which safe, dignified, and secure deportation is not possible.

We call on you to suspend deportations to Haiti until conditions on the ground improve considerably and workable policies can be put in place to protect the lives and dignity of returnees. Deportations place an unnecessary burden on a country still struggling to recover from a devastating natural disaster. Moreover, returning persons to Haiti right now needlessly and callously causes grave suffering and puts lives at risk. No person—regardless of his or her crime—should be sent back to Haiti in light of existing life-threatening conditions.

Members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition