



Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

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PRESS RELEASE

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IACHR URGES UNITED STATES TO SUSPEND DEPORTATIONS TO HAITI

Washington, D.C., February 4, 2011—The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) urges the United States to suspend deportations to Haiti of persons of Haitian origin who are seriously ill or who have family members in the United States.

Following the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, the U.S. government suspended the deportation of Haitians with criminal convictions or charges. According to information the Commission has received, the government announced on December 9, 2010, that it would lift the moratorium on deportations, and the media reported that deportations of Haitians with criminal records resumed on January 20, 2011.

The deportation of seriously ill persons to Haiti could jeopardize their lives, considering the humanitarian crisis that persists in the country, especially the detention conditions in jails and prisons. According to the information received by the Commission, detention centers in Haiti are overcrowded, and the lack of drinking water and adequate sanitation or toilets could facilitate the transmission of cholera, tuberculosis, and other diseases. The IACHR is also concerned that once they arrive in Haiti, seriously ill persons could remain in detention without access to food, drinking water, and adequate medical treatment. Along these lines, U.S. immigrant advocacy organizations informed the Commission that a person of Haitian origin deported on January 20, 2011, has died in a Haitian prison for reasons that have not yet been officially established, after showing symptoms of cholera. In addition, the Inter-American Commission has received troubling information regarding persons being processed for deportation who have immediate family members, even children, in the United States and who in some cases do not have any family members in Haiti.

In light of these circumstances, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights urges the United States to suspend the deportation of Haitians who are seriously ill or who have family ties in the United States. This moratorium should be maintained until such time as Haiti is able to guarantee that detention conditions and access to medical care comply with applicable minimum standards and until the procedures in place to determine and review deportations can adequately take into account the right to family life of those subject to the deportation process, as well as their family ties in the United States.

A principal, autonomous body of the Organization of American States (OAS), the IACHR derives its mandate from the OAS Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights. The Inter-American Commission has a mandate to promote respect for human rights in the region and acts as a consultative body to the OAS in this matter. The Commission is composed of seven independent members who are elected in a personal capacity by the OAS General Assembly and who do not represent their countries of origin or residence.

Press Contact: Joyce Mendoza
Tel. (202) 458-3694
E-mail: cidh-prensa@oas.org