



## STOP DEPORTATIONS TO HAITI

### U.S. Deportations to Haiti Are Inhumane and Tear Families Apart

The January 12, 2010 earthquake that hit Haiti led to a humanitarian catastrophe. As President Barack Obama described, “for a country and a people who are no strangers to hardship and suffering, this tragedy seems especially cruel and incomprehensible.”<sup>1</sup> Immediately following the earthquake, the United States promptly halted all deportations to Haiti, so as not to place an additional burden on the devastated country. One year later, the United States quietly resumed deportations of individuals with criminal convictions, tearing deportees from their families in the U.S. and sending them to Haiti, where they are routinely placed in squalid jails covered in feces, vomit, blood, and trash, and infested with mosquitos and rodents. Deportees from the U.S. are detained; deprived of food, water, and medicine; and subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment by guards. Deportees are the objects of scorn in Haitian society.

#### **The Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis**

On the one-year anniversary of the earthquake, international bodies noted the immense obstacles to Haiti's nascent recovery process. “The situation in Haiti continues to be catastrophic,” said UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova.<sup>2</sup> Soon thereafter, in February 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) urged the U.S. to refrain from deporting individuals to Haiti who had family ties in the U.S. or who were ill.<sup>3</sup> The UN Independent Expert on Haiti has issued a similar call to halt deportations to Haiti at this critical time.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. has refused to heed their calls.

Now is not the time to deport people to Haiti. The U.S. must live up to its reputation as a world leader and halt deportations until conditions improve in Haiti.

#### **The Cholera Epidemic in Haiti**

Ten months after the earthquake hit, in October 2010, an outbreak of cholera was confirmed in Haiti.<sup>5</sup>

Cholera is a bacterial infection that causes severe and potentially fatal dehydration due to uncontrollable diarrhea and vomiting. Cholera sickened more than 450,000 people, or 5% of Haiti's population, in the first year of the outbreak.<sup>6</sup> During a cholera epidemic, the

Center for Disease Control recommends “heightened measures to ensure the safety of drinking water and food, and appropriate facilities and practices for disposal of feces and for hand washing.”<sup>7</sup> These conditions are not being met in many areas of Haiti but least of all in Haiti's prison system and detention centers. Other diseases such as beriberi and tuberculosis have also been serious problems in the Haitian detention system.<sup>8</sup> The International Medical Corps says thousands more are at risk of dying of cholera as cash-strapped medical aid agencies close treatment centers and scale back deliveries of clean water.<sup>9</sup>



#### **Recent Fact-Finding Mission to Haiti**

In September 2011, the Center for Constitutional Rights and Loyola Law Clinic traveled to Haiti to interview deportees and found that the human impact of the deportations has been devastating. Deportees continue to be detained in life-threatening conditions upon arrival in Haiti. Upon release, deportees struggle to find food and housing; some even are forced to find shelter in post-earthquake tent camps. None of those interviewed have been able to secure any means of income and all were dependent on already-struggling family or friends for survival.

Deportees with medical conditions – including HIV, insulin-dependent diabetes, a bleeding ulcer, hypertension, and mental health conditions – reported that they have not been able to access medical care

or urgently-needed medication. Deportees are also unable to obtain Haitian identification cards, which hinders their ability to work and be integrated into Haitian society and makes them even more vulnerable to targeting by the police. Describing the stigma of being a deportee in Haiti, one deportee reported that people stop talking when he walks by. Many expressed feelings of depression and high levels of anxiety about their future and the future of their children and other family members in the United States.

### **Family Impact of Deportations to Haiti**

The University of Miami Clinics have recently interviewed families in the U.S. whose loved ones were recently deported to Haiti. Their stories demonstrate the far-reaching impact of these deportations.



### **Deportations hurt families financially**

Deportation often leaves children and spouses of Haitian deportees financially vulnerable. Families repeatedly reported a drastic decline in food, clothing, housing, and health care in the immediate aftermath of the deportation. Some have even experienced homelessness due to the lost income. One deportee's family of five children told the Clinic they could not afford food and other very basic necessities as the deportee had been the primary breadwinner.

### **Deportations hurt families emotionally**

Physical removal of parents and spouses damages the mental health of deportees and family members left behind in the United States. Families have described feelings of hopelessness, loss, trauma, diminished work and school performance, and psychological and emotional distress, due to an incomplete family structure. One son of a deportee told the Clinic that he and his siblings "try to be happy every day so mom can be happy, but it hurts us a lot." Another deportee's 22 year-old daughter has been asked to assume guardianship over her four minor siblings.

Deportation isn't right at all. The effects it has on me not only physically but mentally is horrible. The Government deporting has broken up this family. We're not completed anymore. How does it feel to be incomplete? It feels like you've been walking with only one pair of shoe on. The deportation hurt us all not one but all. My father worked two jobs for us. Now that he's not here our electricity has been cut off, telephone bill not payed. Refrigerator empty; not eating for two days at most.

--15-year-old daughter of deportee who lives with her mother and four siblings

### **Deportations especially hurt children**

Children who have lost a parent to deportation suffer psychological harm, behavioral changes, and a decline in health and educational performance. One study revealed that children of deportees had increased anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, and setbacks in their schoolwork, including a desire to drop out of school.<sup>10</sup> In interviews, family members described children experiencing severe difficulties in school following the deportations of their fathers. One mother noted that her eight-year-old son had been institutionalized under the Baker Act three times since he has been separated from his father.

**Deportations harm families and violate human rights. Let's stop deportations to Haiti immediately!**

### **Congress should:**

1. Call or write to the Department of Homeland Security to encourage the immediate halt of all deportations to Haiti until conditions significantly improve.
2. Urge DHS and other government agencies to abide by the precautionary measures order issued to the U.S. by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
3. Implement immigration legislation that requires immigration judges to take family hardship into account in deportation proceedings.
4. Give equal treatment to Haitians: Approve the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program.

<sup>1</sup> President Barack Obama, Statement on Haiti (Jan. 13, 2010), [http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2010/01/13/text\\_of\\_president\\_obamas\\_statement\\_on\\_haiti](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2010/01/13/text_of_president_obamas_statement_on_haiti)  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unesco.org>.  
<sup>3</sup> Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Precautionary Measures on Behalf of Gary Resil, et al, against the United States, Feb. 2, 2011.  
<sup>4</sup> Report of U.N. Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Haiti, Michel Forst, <http://daccess-ods.ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/132/04/PDF/G1013204.pdf?OpenElement>  
<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/haiticholera/> (Accessed July 22, 2011).  
<sup>6</sup> Alex Whiting, "Haitians Risk More Cholera Deaths as Aid Agencies Withdraw," <http://haiti.mphise.net/haitians-risk-more-cholera-deaths-aid-agencies-withdraw>.  
<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/haiticholera/> (Accessed July 22, 2011).  
<sup>8</sup> Dr. John P. May Declaration to the Inter-American Commission, March 2011.  
<sup>9</sup> <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/haitians-risk-cholera-deaths-as-aid-agencies-withdraw>  
<sup>10</sup> Ajay Chaudry et al., Urban Inst., Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement 27 (2010).

For additional information, see [www.stophaitideportations.org](http://www.stophaitideportations.org) and <http://ccrjustice.org/ourcases/currentcases/iachr-haitian-removals>