

FAMILIES FOR FREEDOM

3 West 29th Street #1030 New York NY 10001 | 646.290.5551 tel, 800.895.4454 fax | www.familiesforfreedom.org

March 11, 2011

Secretary Janet Napolitano
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Re: *Comments on ICE's Proposed Policy for Resumed Removals to Haiti*

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

We, Families for Freedom (FFF), write to comment on the *Policy for Resumed Removals to Haiti* posted on the website of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on March 7, 2011. FFF is a human rights organization for immigrants facing deportation, and many of our members will face deportation to Haiti if the proposed policy is enacted.

While the proposed policy speaks of ICE's legal requirement to deport people to Haiti, there is no mention of the moral responsibility or requirement that is expected from America in regard to safeguarding human rights. We add our concerns to the recent rebuke of the policy by Roxana Bacon, former UCIS counsel, to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights urging a stop to the resumption of deportations.

No one should be deported to Haiti at this time. Given the conditions that deported persons will face in Haiti, including horrific detention conditions, a cholera epidemic, widespread displacement and destruction from the earthquake, we find that it incomprehensible and rather vindictive that the U.S. government would resume sending people back to Haiti.

The U.S. State Department itself has issued travel warnings to Haiti citing many of the same reasons. Even as the ICE policy speaks of coordination with the Government of Haiti, the two main contenders to form the next Government of Haiti have condemned ICE's policy.

While ICE says it is removing "the worst of the worst", some of the deportees are convicted of minor drug offenses or misdemeanors; others did not even receive jail time in the U.S. 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 are Haitians who served their time years ago and are living law abiding lives in their communities as legal and long term residents in the U.S. and who were unexpectedly rounded up before the December holidays in late 2010.

The below comment is from one of our members, Jerry, who faces deportation if this policy is enacted. We reiterate that resuming removals of Haitians to Haiti is inhumane, unnecessary and unjustified given the present conditions in the country.

"After being released to parole, probation or ICE custody, these Haitians ex-cons are not committing any more crimes in their communities. Most of them were green card holders, hard

working men and women, tax payers, having both U.S. citizen parent(s) and U.S. born children, before they committed their offenses. There are a great number of them that are community activists, role models to the younger generation, their families, children and their friends. They were also rehabilitated before they got arrested by ICE.

Me as a Haitian man, from my point of view, I really would like to see my country elevate likewise as other great countries, in the near future, but as for right now we are too unstable to receive any deportees back home. Please hear our voices and cry to spare our Haitians brothers and sisters lives. Many of the deportees and the 1.5 million people that are in Haiti now are homeless and living under tents. One of the 27 men deported on January, 20, 2011 died of cholera.

I am looking forward to hear a great change by the Obama administration toward Haitian deportations. The change the U.S. government will make will have a great impact to both the Haitian people and the lives of deportees.

Jerry represents thousands of Haitians who are simply asking for the U.S. government to honor its moral code to protect the human rights of those at risk.

We ask that DEPORTATIONS TO HAITI BE STOPPED NOW!

Sincerely,

The board, staff and members of Families for Freedom