

U.S. must stop deportations to Haiti: Deportations now during a global pandemic is Trump's cruel, and usual, punishment of Haitians

April 20, 2020

We the undersigned are concerned about the health and human rights of Haitian immigrants and denounce the Trump Administration's deportation of 61 Haitian Nationals on April 7, 2020, from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers.

We the undersigned demand that the Trump Administration halt all deportations to Haiti during the coronavirus pandemic. More deportations to Haiti are scheduled for the coming days and weeks. Rather than be deported where they face serious harm if they fall ill and risk infecting thousands of others, they should be released from detention into the care of their friends and families so that they may safely quarantine, especially those who are more vulnerable to serious complications from the virus due to age, medical condition or other factors.

We are deeply concerned that all detainees in ICE detention centers have a [high risk](#) of exposure to coronavirus. Dozens of immigration detainees and ICE agents in often-overcrowded detention facilities across the country have tested positive for COVID-19. While states across the country mandate social distancing, in many of the detention centers over 100 detainees live in one dorm room and share only a few toilets. Detainees have minimal access to medical care, COVID tests, soap or hand sanitizer. Given these conditions, detainees are at high risk of both contracting and dying from COVID-19.

However, reducing overcrowding in detention centers does not mean that ICE should deport detainees without proper removal proceedings in the midst of the largest global pandemic of our lifetimes. John Sandweg, Former acting director of ICE, concedes that ICE detention centers "are extremely susceptible to outbreaks of infectious diseases" and [recommends](#) that the Trump Administration "release the thousands of nonviolent, low-flight-risk detainees currently in ICE custody."

We are also concerned that Haiti's fragile government, almost non-existent healthcare system and close, impoverished living conditions would make it challenging to contain and treat a massive surge of COVID-19 cases. According to a local [nonprofit](#), as a result of international policy and government inaction, Haiti has only 39 physicians to manage COVID-19, 124 ICU beds and the capacity to ventilate 62 people in a country of 11 million people. Community spread of the disease, 47 cases and three deaths have been reported. These numbers are likely to be far higher, as only 498 tests had been reportedly administered to date.

It's unclear how the U.S. government could justify deportations when last month it issued a [level 4 travel advisory](#) for Haiti, labeling Haiti as dangerous as conflict zones such as Afghanistan, South Sudan and Somalia. But the deportation on April 7 falls in line with the U.S. government's long history of discrimination and poor treatment against Haitians.

For over 200 years, Haiti has tried to be a friend to the U.S., but the U.S. has never had Haiti's best interest. Haitians continue to pay for winning their independence from France in a slave rebellion in 1804, and for abolishing slavery. The U.S. did not recognize Haiti's statehood until 1862, 58 years after it declared independence. In 1915-34, the U.S. Marines illegally invaded and occupied Haiti, seized control of the Haitian National Bank and amended the constitution to allow foreign land ownership. More recently, the U.S. financially and diplomatically supported the Duvalier dictatorship from 1957-86, supported the overthrow of democratically-elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and meddled in multiple recent [elections](#).

The U.S. immigration prison system as we know it today started in the 1990s when the Coast Guard collected tens of thousands of Haitian refugees and imprisoned them in Guantanamo Bay. Guantanamo was known as the "[HIV prison camp](#)" because of the poor treatment of HIV positive Haitian refugees, who were wrongly blamed for the AIDS epidemic in the U.S.

President Donald Trump promised to be a [champion](#) for Haitian-Americans on his campaign trail in South Florida in 2016, but this president too has disregarded the rights and dignity of Haitians. President Trump notoriously referred to Haiti as a sh*ithole country in 2018, and terminated Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians despite evidence from his own [State Department](#) that Haiti was unprepared to receive deportees due to a severe housing shortage and public health crisis following the 2010 earthquake, Hurricane Matthew and a [cholera epidemic](#) brought by United Nations peacekeeping soldiers.

In the words of The Miami Herald [Editorial Board](#), "Deportations despite coronavirus is Trump's cruel, and usual, punishment of Haitians."

We proudly stand in solidarity with our Haitian sisters and brothers and urge the Trump Administration to immediately take the following actions:

- Halt all deportations of Haitian Nationals back to Haiti;
- Release immigrants from detention maximizing use of humanitarian parole, release on recognizance, and where necessary, community-based alternatives to detention, following medical screening and in a manner consistent with public health protocols on COVID-19; and
- Coordinate with local groups to ensure housing and transportation upon release, and avoid holding asylum seekers in enclosed or densely populated spaces.

Signed,

1. A. Philip Randolph Institute
2. African Advocacy Network (AAN)
3. Adelanto Visitation Network
4. Adhikaar

5. Advocate Visitors with Immigrants in Detention
6. African Communities Together
7. Al Otro Lado
8. Alianza Americas
9. Alkalay Law Office
10. Alternative Chance
11. AME-SADA, INC.
12. America's Voice
13. Americans for Immigrant Justice
14. Association of Haitian Professionals (AHP)
15. Baptist Peace fellowship of North America
16. Beyond Borders
17. Black Alliance for Immigration Justice (BAJI)
18. Black LGBTQ+ Migrant Project (BLMP)
19. Brooklyn Defender Services
20. Cabinet d'Avocats Spécialisés en Litige Stratégique des Droits Humains (CASLSDH)
21. Cameroon American Council
22. CARECEN-LA
23. Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS)
24. Church World Service (CWS Global)
25. Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
26. CLUE-Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
27. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
28. Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
29. Coalition on Human Needs
30. Community Justice Exchange - National Bail Fund Network
31. Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
32. Consortium for a Haiti that Works (CHW)
33. Communist Party USA (CPUSA)
34. Crossing Borders – Dubuque
35. CUNY
36. Defenseurs Plus
37. Democratic Socialists of America - Los Angeles
38. Disaster Law Project
39. Dominican Development Center, Inc.
40. Dominican Sister of Mission San Jose
41. Dominican Sisters of Houston
42. Dominican Sisters of Tacoma
43. Environmental Justice Initiative for Haiti
44. Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement
45. Families Belong Together
46. Families For Freedom
47. First Friends of NJ & NY

48. Floaves Inc
49. Fondasyon Mapou
50. Four Freedoms Forum
51. Franciscan Sisters of the Poor
52. Freedom for Immigrants
53. FWD.us
54. Gender Action
55. Grassroots International
56. Haiti Justice Alliance
57. Haiti Justice Committee
58. Haiti Justice Committee of Minnesota
59. Haiti Partners
60. Haiti Support Network
61. Haitian-American Community Coalition, Inc. (HCC)
62. Haitian Americans United for Progress, Inc. (HAUP)
63. Haitian Bridge Alliance
64. Haitian Educators League for Progress
65. Haitian Studies Association
66. Hastings to Haiti Partnership
67. Healthworks Ending Detention
68. Holy Names Sisters
69. Holy Union Sisters
70. Hope Border Institute
71. Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
72. Immaculate Heart Community
73. Immigrant and Refugee Committee, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
74. Immigrant Defenders Law Center
75. Immigrant Legal Defense
76. Immigrants List
77. Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice
78. Innovation Law Lab
79. Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)
80. Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center
81. International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School
82. Jerusalem Agape SDA Church
83. Jewish Community Action
84. Justice For Our Neighbors Houston
85. KODESOLD
86. Kriyol Dance Collective
87. La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE)
88. LA Voice
89. Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
90. Latin America Working Group (LAWG)

91. Leadership Conference of Women Religious
92. Li, Li, Li! Read
93. MADRE
94. Make the Road NY
95. Matthew 25
96. Minnesota Immigrants Rights Action Network (MIRAC)
97. Minority Humanitarian Foundation
98. Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights
99. National Conference of Black Lawyers
100. National Immigrant Justice Center
101. National Justice for Our Neighbors
102. National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
103. National Lawyers Guild (NLG)
104. National Lawyers Guild Central Arizona
105. National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
106. New Sanctuary Coalition
107. Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
108. New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE)
109. Ohio Immigrant Alliance
110. Orange County Equality Coalition
111. Partners In Health
112. Pax Christi Ayiti
113. Poder Latinx
114. Presbyterian Church USA
115. Priority Africa Network
116. Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
117. Project Blueprint
118. Project South
119. Quixote Center
120. Reformed Church of Highland Park
121. Refugee Support Network
122. Religious of Jesus and Mary
123. Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH)
124. Resilience Orange County
125. Resources to Resources
126. Rian Immigrant Center
127. RLM Art Studio/Drawing the Line
128. Salesians of Don Bosco
129. Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund
130. San Antonio Region Justice For Our Neighbors
131. Sant La, Haitian Neighborhood Center
132. School Sisters of Notre Dame
133. School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic Midwest Province

134. School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province
135. Schools of the America Watch (SOAW) East Bay, California
136. Sequoia Potential
137. Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)
138. Sinsinawa Dominican Associates
139. Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
140. Sister of Charity of Leavenworth
141. Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross USA Province
142. Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
143. Sisters of St. Joseph
144. Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
145. Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood NY Office of Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation
146. Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, LA Province
147. Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus & Mary
148. Sisters of the Living Word
149. Still Waters Anti-trafficking Program
150. Society of the Holy Child Jesus, American Province
151. South Texas Human Rights Center
152. SFV Indivisible
153. The Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
154. The Haitian Women's Collective
155. The Legal Aid Society (New York)
156. The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
157. Transforming Justice Orange County
158. UC Davis Immigration Law Clinic
159. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
160. United We Dream
161. Venice Resistance
162. Witness at the Border
163. Women For Orange County
164. Woodhull Freedom Foundation