

Homeland Security resumes deportation of Haitian immigrants

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Following an announcement last month by United States Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson suspending the deportation of Haitians, the government has quietly resumed its policy of deportations. Already, planeloads of Haitian nationals are being flown back to Haiti.

On September 22, the US government announced that it was ending a six-year moratorium on deportations of Haitian citizens instituted in the wake of the devastating 2010 earthquake. While US officials claimed that this shift in policy stemmed from a supposed improvement of conditions in Haiti, the real reason was the arrival of growing numbers of Haitians on the border between Tijuana and San Diego.

Just weeks later, in the face of the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew in October, Homeland Security again reversed its policy, renewing the moratorium on Haitian deportations. The decision was then lauded from both sides of Congress and various humanitarian organizations.

In a letter to President Barack Obama signed by more than 50 members of Congress urging a reversal of his original decision to resume deportations of Haitians, the members cynically struck a pose of disinterested humanitarianism. Senator Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat, called for a halt to the policy until a degree of internal normalcy could be attained in the Caribbean island nation, stating: "Haiti is a deeply impoverished country and there is no question as to the devastation caused by Hurricane Matthew. Haitians living in the United States should be granted short-term relief from deportation until the situation in their home country stabilizes."

At an event in Mexico City, Johnson first announced the decision to temporarily resume the suspension of deportations. "We will have to deal with that situation, address it, be sympathetic to the plight of the people of Haiti as a result of the hurricane," he said. This comes from an administration that has deported upwards of 3.2

million people. Johnson did not wait long before he evinced his real intentions, stating, "But after that condition has been addressed, we intend to resume the policy change."

Evidently, the ravages caused by the recent hurricane, not to mention the continuing effects of the 2010 earthquake, have, in Johnson's eyes, been "addressed" in a matter of days. Such shifts in policy are part of a long-standing strategy of the Democrats to falsely pose as the friend of immigrants, and in this case were clearly calculated with the 2016 elections in mind.

The *Miami Herald* Tuesday quoted officials of the Haitian National Police, which is in charge of meeting deportees upon their arrival in the country, as reporting that the first planeload of Haitian immigrants who had reached the US-Mexico border arrived in Port-au-Prince last Thursday, and a second landed on Tuesday, US Election day. A police spokesman said that the Haitians had been admitted into the US solely in order to imprison them, put them through removal proceedings and then ship them back to Haiti.

These new deportations, coming just five weeks after Hurricane Matthew, with millions still facing homelessness and hunger, was initiated secretly, without any public notification.

Initially, the Department of Homeland Security had stated on September 22 that deportations would begin for those Haitian immigrants who had overstayed their temporary protected status (TPS) first granted them in 2010 following the 2010 earthquake. The Department of Homeland Security issued 18-month TPS to Haitian nationals that allowed them to live and work in the US, although it did not include a path to citizenship. Currently, there are nearly 58,000 Haitians who are living in the US under TPS.

Far from helping the impoverished Haitians, a mere 75 people are accepted each day into the US as more than

300 arrive daily into Mexico, according to Mexico's National Human Rights Commission. Upon arriving at the Tijuana-San Ysidro border, Haitians are given a paper slip with a due date to appear for processing, many having dates forcing them to wait up to five weeks. More than 40,000 Haitians are expected to make the dangerous trip to the US-Mexico border.

Some 85,000 Haitians migrated to Brazil in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. At the time, the Brazilian economy benefitted from a commodities boom fueled in large part by Chinese demand. Just as Brazil sought to play a leading role in the UN's MINUSTAH "peacekeeping" mission in Haiti, the better to bolster its international prestige and consolidate its role as a regional power, the Brazilian ruling elite was eager to snap up a new supply of lower-paid immigrant workers and began offering work visas to Haitians in 2012 under the guise of humanitarian good will.

Jean Veniel, a 38-year-old construction worker and painter, spoke to WSWs reporters in Tijuana on the dismal prospects facing Haitian workers and youth. "The corrupt [Haitian] government isn't offering any help. For professionals, there's nothing for them, no careers waiting for them, there's no place for them in Haiti. The lack of work, education, healthcare – all these things that we don't have are basic and important for the country's development."

Brazil's newly installed president, Michel Temer, also played the humanitarian card at a UN summit in New York in late September, claiming to have taken in 95,000 refugees, the vast bulk of whom were Haitians fleeing the devastation of their country. This is all for public consumption. That the government began issuing visas at all after a two-year delay is telling. Far from a benevolent humanitarian gesture, the basic indifference of the Brazilian ruling class, as much as the American, was underscored in the squalid living conditions that the Haitian immigrants were provided upon arriving in 2010, as well as the hundreds of cases of Haitians working in conditions of slave labor reported by Brazil's Ministry of Labor.

Where once it was able to absorb and exploit Haitian labor under a humanitarian guise, the blows of Brazil's own ongoing economic crisis have forced the Brazilian ruling class to dispel with this pretense and now mercilessly expel Haitian immigrants from the workforce.

As a result of layoffs, lack of job prospects and absence of any significant social programs to assist them, the tens of thousands of Haitian migrant workers initially taken in

are left with few other options than to leave Brazil and make the more than 7,000 mile trip to the US.

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September, US officials reportedly entered into discussions with Brazil's President Temer on the possibility of forcibly deporting the Haitians now gathered on the US border back to Brazil.

WSWS reporters spoke to Haitian immigrants in Tijuana on the conditions that compelled them to take this costly and perilous journey.

"Nicaragua was really tough," a former 19-year-old soldier told WSWs reporters. "All I remember is being on a boat for nine hours in the middle of the night, it was freezing, it was disorienting. And in Guatemala the police there saw me and would demand money, it was corruption, corruption, corruption... I've been here waiting to cross into the United States for about two months. I've spent thousands of dollars trying to get here. My father sold his house, my friends got money together just to send me over here."

Vicent, 30, a construction worker, said: "I've been here for three weeks. Like everyone else here, I'm looking for a better life, looking for work. After the 2010 earthquake, everything was destroyed and there was no work anywhere. I lost my three-year-old in the earthquake. I was in Brazil for about three years, working in construction, but after a while there was no work in Brazil and I had to leave. I'm hoping I can find work in the United States. A roof, a house, being able to share a meal with your family without trouble -- that's all we're looking for."

The stranding of Haitian workers at the US-Mexico border is a product of the ongoing worldwide economic crisis. The misplaced hopes in the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa as a base for capitalist stabilization has been largely abandoned. The economies of the US, Mexico, Brazil and Haiti, although in many respects differing in quality and magnitude, remain in a general slump, and the immigration policies of all the major nation states have grown increasingly punitive. In the end, it is the international working class that is made to pay for the irrationality of such a political and economic set-up.



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