

Trump administration ends temporary residency for 60,000 Haitian nationals

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On Monday, the Trump Administration announced that some 60,000 Haitian nationals would not have their Temporary Protected Status (TPS) renewed. Under TPS, Haitians that sought refuge after Haiti's earthquake in 2010 have been allowed to live and work in the United States. The nationals now have until July 2019 to leave the country or face detention and deportation.

A statement from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) says the 18-month lead time is to "allow for an orderly transition before the designation terminates on July 22, 2019."

Haitians are the second-largest group of foreigners with temporary protected status currently living in the US. The program was created in 1990 to protect foreign nationals from deportation if the executive branch determined that natural disasters or armed conflict in their countries had created conditions unfit for their return. There are currently some 300,000 foreigners living in the United States under TPS.

Monday's decision came after DHS officials determined that Haiti's recovery from the 2010 earthquake had been sufficient. A senior official of the department stated the "extraordinary conditions" that followed the disaster "no longer exist."

"Since the 2010 earthquake, the number of displaced people in Haiti has decreased by 97 percent," Homeland Security secretary Elaine Duke said in a statement. "Significant steps have been taken to improve the stability and quality of life for Haitian citizens, and Haiti is able to safely receive traditional levels of returned citizens."

The 18-month deadline, Duke said, will allow for an "orderly transition," permitting the Haitians to "arrange their departure" and their government to prepare for their arrival.

However, the government's claims about conditions in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere are utterly false. Haiti is still struggling to recover from the earthquake. Many in Haiti rely on money from expatriated relatives in the United States. The Haitian government has asked the Trump administration to extend the protected status.

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti, claiming up to 316,000 lives and displacing more than 1.5 million people. A report by the United Nations in January claimed that 2.5 million Haitians are still in need of humanitarian aid.

The earthquake further injured approximately 300,000 people and left 3.3 million facing food shortages. The disaster destroyed or damaged more than 80 percent of rural housing, and hundreds of thousands were forced to live in makeshift tent cities. Public buildings such as schools and hospitals were destroyed during the quake, severely damaging crucial social infrastructure.

Only months after the quake hit, one of the worst cholera epidemics in recent history rapidly engulfed Haiti, killing thousands and infecting more than 6 percent of the population in just over two years. Haiti's healthcare system, already strained, was exacerbated by the outbreak.

Reconstruction efforts in Haiti have been slow as well, despite the billions raised in international aid. The Red Cross is accused of building only six homes in Haiti since the disaster. With nearly half a billion dollars in donated funds, the Red Cross has spent millions on internal expenses.

The country has experienced multiple disasters since the initial earthquake in 2010. Hurricane Sandy crashed through the country in 2012, causing drastic flooding, scores of new deaths, and cases of disease infections. A

three-year drought followed sending the country into deeper levels of famine and poverty. In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew killed at least 1,000 people and devastated rural and urban areas alike. Collapsed trees and buildings blocked roadways, making it difficult to distribute medical supplies and support.

Beyond natural disasters, Haiti is victim to decades of US and UN occupation. The legacy of occupation and invasion has continued to shadow the island of Hispaniola in the decades since the US officially pulled out in 1934.

United States Marines invaded Santo Domingo in 1965, and carried out an intervention in Haiti in 1994. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, also known as MINUSTAH, has kept peacekeepers in the country since 2004. The UN peacekeepers in Haiti have been accused of accidentally spreading cholera after the earthquake.

Sending the Haitian nationals back to Haiti is nothing short of criminal, but the Trump administration has insisted that the TPS program was only meant to be temporary, not a way for people to become long-term legal residents of the United States.

Policy Director of the American Immigration Council, Royce Bernstein Murray, told NPR that Haitians with TPS have 27,000 American-born children with citizenship, and that the Trump Administration's decision will throw these families into crisis as their lives are uprooted.

Earlier this month, the administration announced that it would not renew the provisional residency of 2,500 Nicaraguans as well.



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