

17 February 2009

Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Naval Security Station  
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20393

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

As members of Refugee Council USA, a coalition of 25 non-governmental organizations based in the United States that advocate for the rights and protection of refugees, we write to ask you to designate the country of Haiti for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). In September 2008 Haiti suffered massive destruction wrought by four deadly storms: Tropical Storms Fay and Hanna and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

By letter dated December 2, 2008, Refugee Council USA made this same request of former Secretary Michael Chertoff. On December 8th, one week after the letter was sent, the Department of Homeland Security resumed deportation of Haitians, despite the continuing state of national emergency in Haiti. (The agency had placed a temporary moratorium on deportations immediately after the storms). We hope that under your leadership, DHS will implement a more humane policy on this issue by designating Haiti for TPS.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that 800,000 Haitians are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. The devastating storm damage has not only left many of Haiti's 8.5 million citizens homeless – without food, water, shelter, or healthcare – but has also compounded the food shortage crisis that developed during the food riots in April. Indeed the Artibonite “breadbasket” region of Haiti has been flooded by storm waters, destroying an estimated 180 million dollars in crops.

We join Haitian President Rene Preval and a number of U.S. Congressional Representatives in calling on the United States to halt deportations of Haitians until their homeland recovers. As President Preval delineated in his October 4<sup>th</sup> public plea to the U.S. Administration, deporting thousands of Haitians under the current circumstances will further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, and may also increase the stress on Haiti's already fragile economy. TPS will allow the Haitian government to invest its limited resources into rebuilding damaged infrastructure and offering emergency relief to its suffering citizens.

TPS has been granted in the past to nationals of Honduras and Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and to Salvadorans after an earthquake in 2001. As you are aware, TPS may be granted when any of the following conditions are met: there is ongoing armed conflict that poses a serious threat to personal safety; it is requested by a foreign state that temporarily cannot handle the return of nationals due to an environmental disaster; or when extraordinary and temporary conditions in a foreign

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and Immigrants  
Women's Commission for  
Refugee Women & Children  
World Relief

state exist which prevent aliens from returning. Haiti's current circumstances fall well within the criteria for granting TPS.

We welcome an opportunity for further dialogue, and request an opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss this urgent issue. Please contact Elizabeth Campbell [ecampbell@RCUSA.org](mailto:ecampbell@RCUSA.org) to schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert J. Carey  
Chair, Refugee Council USA