

## Haitian deportations show U.S. double-talk

**S**ay what you will about President Obama, but something is undeniable: When it comes to immigration his administration has been consistent in speaking from both sides of its mouth.

Take the case of Haiti, for example.

After last year's devastating earthquake Obama promised at the United Nations that the U.S. would "stand with the people of Haiti until they can stand on their own two feet." And in July Secretary of State Clinton said "Our resolve to stand with the people of Haiti for the long term remains undiminished."

However, in January the U.S. deportation of Haitians resumed in full force.

At the time, after reports of at least one deportee dying a few days after being sent back, the administration suspended deportations. But even though conditions in Haiti have, if anything, become worse in the past few months, on April 15 the Obama administration sent another plane load of deportees back to their impoverished country.

Returning people back to a place deeply mired in a humanitarian crisis of such dramatic proportions, is nothing short of inhumane.

Fifteen months after the earthquake, more than a million people remain homeless surviving in very precarious conditions. In displaced person camps they suffer chronic hunger, threats of eviction, and lack of essentials such as water and medical care. In addition, a cholera epidemic that has killed 4,500 people and sickened 234,000 others is expected to get much worse.

"Deportees are jailed in filthy police stations in Haiti with no access to clean water or food and are exposed to human feces and vomit," reports the New York-based **Center for Constitutional Rights**. "These conditions during a cholera epidemic are — quite

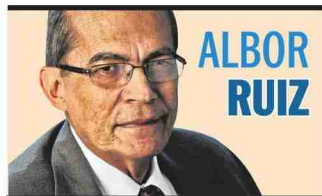
literally — deadly."

The CCR describes the case of Wildrick Guerrier, 34, who died from cholera-like symptoms just nine days after being deported to Haiti in January. The center said that others have also become ill.

"Many of those deported on April 15, 2011, had serious medical and mental health conditions. Additionally, deportees often leave behind children who are U.S. citizens, as well as other family members," the CCR adds.

This tragic reality prompted the Inter-

American Commission on Human Rights to urge the U.S. to stop deporting Haitians. The commission also expressed serious concern that the deportations would separate families and place people with medical conditions in life-threatening



conditions.

Nevertheless, the Obama administration ignored the commission and resumed its senseless policy of sending Haitians back.

As it usually does, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency has stated that only people with criminal records are being repatriated, but Haitian leaders know better. People with only nonviolent misdemeanor records and nonviolent drug offenses are also being deported, they say.

On April 19 the CCR, the University of Miami Immigration and Human Rights Clinics and other groups began circulating a petition urging President Obama, Secretary Clinton and Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano, to halt all deportations to Haiti.

"Please live up to your pledge to uphold human rights and halt these inhumane and cruel deportations to Haiti," they plead. After all its promises, it is the least the Obama administration can do.

The petition can be signed at [http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/383/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=6590](http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/383/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6590).

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