

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to you in support of Haitian President René Préval's recent request for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian immigrants in the United States. We feel that Haiti's ongoing political and economic struggles and the extraordinary destruction caused by several natural disasters more than qualifies Haitian nationals who are already in the United States for TPS.

As you know, TPS may be granted when any of the following conditions are met: there is ongoing armed conflict posing a serious threat to personal safety; it is requested by a foreign state that temporarily cannot handle the return of nationals due to environmental disaster; or when extraordinary and temporary conditions in a foreign state exist which prevent aliens from returning. There are currently six countries that are protected under the TPS provision: Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Burundi, Somalia, and Sudan, all of which have obtained status renewal because the Department of Homeland Security has determined that the country in question is unable to handle the return of its nationals. As President Préval's letter makes clear, Haiti meets *all* of the requirements for TPS and is just as deserving as the other currently protected nations, if not more so.

In addition to the desperate poverty from which far too many of its citizens suffer and the political turmoil that has embroiled the nation for much of its recent history, this past October, Tropical Storm Noel dealt a devastating blow to this already struggling nation. Sadly, however, Noel was only one of several natural disasters to wreak havoc on Haiti. In May of 2004, floods caused thousands of deaths along the border with the Dominican Republic. Only four months later, Tropical Storm Jeanne caused more than 2,000 deaths, countless injuries, and the complete destruction of homes, agricultural fields, and businesses.

As you know, the original designation for Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador was granted in response to similarly destructive natural disasters. For the past ten years in the cases of Nicaragua and Honduras and the past seven in the case of El Salvador, the United States has rightfully acknowledged and supported the efforts of these nations to return to a sense of normalcy by granting and extending their TPS. Meanwhile, at the

same time and under equally dire situations, Haitian migrants have not received similar treatment.

Haiti has made considerable progress in its efforts to recover from the physical and political damages of recent years through its commendable rebuilding efforts and its recent democratic elections. Yet, the Haitian government still cannot sustain the lives of its entire population and the repatriation of the very people who can help Haiti through remittances only further hinders its recovery efforts.

It would take decades for a wealthier, more stable nation to recover from challenges similar to those facing Haiti. However, Haiti also lacks the physical and economic infrastructure necessary to protect its citizens from natural disasters, and any development efforts are further stunted by the constant crisis and turmoil afflicting the nation. By increasing the burden on this small nation's struggling economic and political system, we are not only delaying its recovery. Instead, we are also leaving the government vulnerable to greater political instability and increasing the likelihood of human and physical loss from the highly probable event of a future natural disaster.

Given the impact that regional instability has on our own economy and immigration levels, ensuring the long-term development of Haiti is not only an act of benevolence, it is truly in the best interest of the United States. We applaud President Préval's efforts on behalf of his struggling nation, and respectfully request that you grant Haitians the same consideration and protection that you have supported for other deserving nations.

Sincerely,


Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Kendrick B. Meek
Member of Congress

U. S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20529



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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The Honorable Alcee L. Hastings
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hastings:

Thank you for your letter of February 20, 2008 to President George W. Bush requesting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian nationals currently residing in the United States. Your letter has been referred to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for response as we are responsible for administering the TPS program.

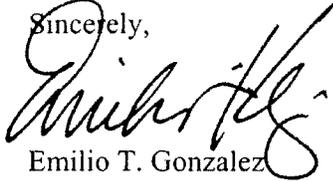
When conditions warrant, U.S. law permits the Secretary of Homeland Security, as a matter of discretion, to designate a country for TPS when a foreign state officially requests such designation due to a natural event, such as an earthquake, flood, drought, epidemic or other environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption of the living conditions in the area affected, *and* the foreign state is unable, temporarily, to handle adequately the return of its nationals. Before such a designation can occur, the Secretary of Homeland Security must also consult with other appropriate agencies of the U.S. Government. The Administration is concerned for nationals of Haiti affected by the recurring natural disasters that have struck Haiti over the past several years and the consequent economic tensions that have followed. USCIS will continue to closely monitor conditions in Haiti to gather pertinent information to determine whether a TPS designation is appropriate.

Please rest assured that the U.S. Government remains committed to assisting populations in need around the world through its humanitarian programs. The U.S. Government is committed to continuing to work closely with the Government of Haiti, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the international community to address the humanitarian and security concerns facing Haiti. Since fiscal year 2004, the U.S. Government has allocated nearly \$400 million in assistance to Haiti, including \$64 million for disaster relief following Tropical Storm Jeanne and Hurricane Dennis and, more recently, \$200,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross in support of its humanitarian programs in Haiti. The assistance has provided jobs, vocational training, food assistance, and medical care, as well as technical advice and budget support to the Government of Haiti. The U.S. Government has also supported democracy-building projects and law enforcement training in Haiti.

The Honorable Alcee L. Hastings
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Thank you again for sharing your concerns with us. I hope that this information has been helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emilio T. Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "G".

Emilio T. Gonzalez
Director



ALCEE L. HASTINGS
23RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
FLORIDA

RULES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE
AND BUDGET PROCESS
CHAIRMAN

UNITED STATES
HELSINKI COMMISSION
CHAIRMAN

FLORIDA DELEGATION
CO-CHAIRMAN

SENIOR DEMOCRATIC WHIP



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0923

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www.alceehastings.house.gov

April 15, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am in receipt of your Administration's response to my February 20, 2008 letter requesting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian nationals currently residing in the United States. While I appreciate the reply, I am disappointed by its failure to provide a substantive explanation for why Haitian nationals should not be granted TPS.

As my letter stated, Haiti meets *all* of the conditions under which a nation may be granted TPS, conditions which U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Emilio T. Gonzalez re-enumerated in his response. According to Director Gonzalez, the Secretary of Homeland Security may designate a country for TPS "when a foreign state officially request such a designation due to a natural event, such as an earthquake, flood, drought, epidemic or other environmental disaster resulting in a substantial, but temporary, disruption of the living conditions in the area affected."

On February 7, 2008, Haitian President René Préval made such a request. His nation had recently been ravaged by Tropical Storm Noel in October 2007. This devastating blow was dealt as Haiti was still struggling to recover from Tropical Storm Jeanne of 2004, a storm which caused more than 2,000 deaths, countless injuries, the complete destruction of homes, agricultural fields, and businesses, and which came only four months after floods caused approximately as many deaths along the border with the Dominican Republic. These are conditions similar to or worse than those under which Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador were granted TPS designation, a designation that they have rightfully maintained for ten years in the case of Nicaragua and Honduras and seven years in the case of El Salvador.

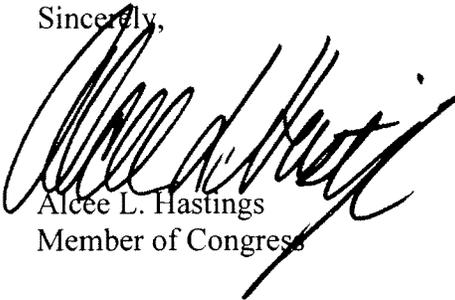
In addition, Director Gonzalez stated that a nation must also be “unable, temporarily, to handle adequately the return of its nationals.” As the current situation in Haiti makes clear, Haiti unquestionably meets this condition. While your Administration continues to sit back and “monitor the situation,” conditions in Haiti continue to worsen.

In recent days, thousands of Haitians have flooded the streets in desperation to decry rapidly escalating food prices. In a nation where three-quarters of the population lives on under \$2 per day, the cost of staple foods has skyrocketed 50% within the last year. Haiti is not only the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, but it also ranks third, behind Somalia and Afghanistan, as the nation with the highest per capita daily deficit in calorie intake. How desperate must the humanitarian crisis in Haiti become before the United States is willing to take adequate action?

While I am certainly encouraged by the monetary assistance the U.S. Government has provided to Haiti in recent years, it does not go far enough to help this struggling nation rebuild the physical and economic infrastructure necessary for a stable, effective democracy. Though Haiti has made considerable progress in recent years, the repatriation of the very people who have provided remittances totaling nearly a third of the country’s gross domestic product will further hinder Haiti’s recovery efforts. The deportation of Haitian nationals in the United States only increases the burden on this small nation’s already stressed economic and political system.

Granting Haitian nationals TPS is not only a morally sound policy, it is also in our nation’s best interest. Only 600 miles from our shores, political and economic instability in Haiti impacts our own economy and immigration levels, thereby making it our responsibility to ensure Haiti’s long-term stability. Thus, I once again respectfully request that you grant Haitians TPS and allow them the same consideration and protection that you have supported for other deserving nations. If you do not believe that TPS should be granted, then I request a detailed explanation as to why.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress