

law on asylum claims which gives all asylum-seekers an equal chance to prove their claims without regard to their national origin.

We would like you to include in your response to this letter, answers to the following questions:

How many Haitians are currently being detained by the INS in Miami and in which facilities? How many have been detained since December when the new policy went into effect?

How many Haitians have been intercepted on the high seas on a monthly basis over the last year? How many were brought to United States? How many were returned to Haiti?

How many Cubans have been intercepted on the high seas on a monthly basis over the last year? How many were brought to United States? How many were returned to Cuba?

Why does this policy apply only to Haitians and not to Cubans or people of any other nationality? How is this distinction singling out Haitians justified by law?

What was the rate of approval for Haitian asylum seekers prior to the institution of this policy? What is the rate of approval since the policy came into effect?

As the number of detainees appears to be small, though significant, it does not appear that a mass exodus of Haitians is taking place. And we stress again that there do appear to be fewer Haitians in this asylum category than Cubans. Thus, the decision to single out Haitians for this harsh treatment while they are seeking to avail themselves of the American tradition—and law—of granting refuge to people who face unjust persecution at home is discriminatory and unfair.

We see absolutely no justification for this policy. We strongly urge you to reverse this policy in Miami and treat Haitian asylum-seekers equally to the way we treat asylum seekers from other countries, as is required by law.

Representatives Barney Frank, John Conyers, Jr., Joseph Crowley, Howard L. Berman, Barbara Lee, Rosa L. DeLauro, Xavier Becerra, Corrine Brown, Carrie P. Meek, Alcee L. Hastings, Michael E. Capuano, Maxine Waters, Scherrod Brown, Michael M. Honda, Maurice D. Hinchey, José E. Serrano, William D. Delahunt.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, it is now with great pleasure that I yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), whose concern with Haiti I think has preceded her coming to the Congress. She has worked diligently on the subject.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) for his leadership and for organizing tonight's special order on the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. I also want to acknowledge the leadership of the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MEEK), the chairperson for the Congressional Black Caucus' Haiti Task Force, for her strong commitment to the people of Haiti.

For the past several months I have worked with my colleagues here in Congress to communicate to the White House that it is really time to revisit, now, United States policy toward Haiti. Since the 2000 elections, Haiti has been in a political impasse, as the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) mentioned. This impasse has framed U.S. policy in such a way that very little bilateral assistance is being sent to Haiti and all multilateral assistance has totally been blocked.

Despite the political problems, we have been increasingly aware of the humanitarian crisis which is brewing in Haiti. Much of this crisis can be directly pinned to the social sector resources being blocked from the small island nation. In fact, the United States representative to the Inter-American Development Bank directed the bank's president to block disbursement of four social sector loans to Haiti. These loans had been approved by the bank's board of directors and were ratified by the Haitian parliament. Considering Haiti's current crisis, this action is really inexcusable.

In April, I was joined by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) and all 38 of my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus as we introduced legislation that would decouple political impasse from the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. This legislation is called the New Partnership for Haiti Resolution, which now has over 60 co-sponsors. So I strongly urge my colleagues to join us by signing on as a co-sponsor on a bipartisan basis to this resolution.

I have learned today in a Dow Jones International news report that what may be the last attempt by the OAS Secretary General to mediate an end to a 2-year-old political impasse has failed. It is clear that efforts to come to a resolution are not working.

Furthermore, we really cannot wait to end the political impasse, because humanitarian relief must be sent. We cannot wait any longer. The time has come for the United States to demonstrate strong leadership by reforming its policy toward Haiti. The United States policy of stalling the delivery of international humanitarian aid to Haiti is fostering instability and anarchy in this struggling democracy. Haiti's miserable poverty is indisputable. Furthermore, we can no longer bury our heads in the sand on this issue.

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Without strong United States leadership, the crisis will continue to spiral out of control.

Already, the national rate of persons with HIV and AIDS has risen to 300,000, or 4 percent of the entire population, leaving 163 children orphaned. The infant mortality rate has increased to 74 deaths out of every 1,000 babies born, and now, five mothers will die out of the same number of births. Mr. Speaker, 125 patients die daily of disease-related illnesses.

While most of the Western world has eradicated diseases like polio, health officials report that many Haitians do not have the resources to pay for life-saving vaccinations for their children. This is just morally unacceptable. We must remember that many diseases know no boundaries. The doctor-to-patient ratio has fallen to 1 to 11,000, leaving very little chance that sick persons in the rural areas will ever get even the basic health care.

So it is unacceptable to simply stand by and watch a season of misery inflict

pain, suffering, and death on human beings right here in our own neighborhood. We must address this injustice. We must release IBD funds to Haiti. It is really our moral imperative, and we must urge President Bush to step up to the plate.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for her excellent exposition of the circumstances there.

Am I correct in thinking that there is a ray of hope, that it looks like the political differences are being resolved to the satisfaction of the World Bank authorities and that we may be moving toward a resolution of the problem?

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I am cautiously optimistic. I believe that there is a team that went down to Haiti to begin to look at what is going on in the four sectors and we have urged, and I believe the gentleman participated in the meeting, the bank officials to really understand why these loans should be released, and regardless of whatever the political situation is, that the humanitarian assistance is very important to prevent misery and untold deaths which are now occurring as a result of no funding being there.

Mr. CONYERS. The gentlewoman is saying that regardless of what the political position is, people should not starve or become destitute, subject to the ravages of extreme poverty, merely because there is a political dispute between the parties.

Ms. LEE. Absolutely. People have a right to basic health care, basic food, and basic shelter. There is no way that we should be party to creating more misery, and by our blocking funds which have already been negotiated; these are contracts that have already been signed off on, and for us to block that creates even more misery which creates even more instability, so it becomes a vicious cycle. And I believe, as all Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, as does the gentleman, that we must make sure that we take the moral high ground on this and encourage the loans to be released so that we can move forward to assist the people of Haiti, because they so deserve to be assisted.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. UNDERWOOD (at the request of Mr. GEPHARDT) for today on account of a typhoon in Guam.

Mrs. ROUKEMA (at the request of Mr. ARMEY) for July 8 and the balance of the week on account of illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to: