

HOUSTON COALITION AGAINST HATE™

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September 23, 2021

Via Electronic Mail

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Attorney General Merrick Garland
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20528

Re.: Call to Biden Administration to immediately have CBP cease and desist in the mistreatment of Haitian Migrants

Dear President Biden, Attorney General Garland, and Secretary Mayorkas:

On behalf of Houston Coalition Against Hate (HCAH) and Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative (HILSC), representing over 100 community-based nonprofits, institutions, leaders, and organizations in our nation's fourth most populous city, we ask you to immediately stop and investigate the increasingly racist and discriminatory treatment of Haitian migrants and asylum seekers at the US Border in Del Rio, Texas. We are outraged to discover this Administration is contemplating re-



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opening Guantanamo Bay to set it up as a Haitian Internment Camp, repeating the racist and cruel treatment of Haitians from thirty years ago.¹ We understand the United States is in the midst of a crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we cannot allow and refuse to silently bear witness to the blatant discrimination and violent and draconian use of force, including caging and whipping of Haitian migrants by US officials. We are particularly disturbed by the treatment of Haitian children by CBP, and call for a full report on the status of their health and well-being. At this stage in our nation's development, violent and inhumane protocols towards our neighbors are not the actions and values that our government should be demonstrating and condoning.

We call upon the White House to issue a public statement condemning the racist mistreatment of Haitians at the US border. We specifically ask the President to issue an Executive Order implementing the following:

1. Immediately cease, desist, and investigate allegations of violence and mistreatment of Haitian migrants at the border by Customs and Border Protection (CBP).² We ask the President to set up a Task Force to specifically investigate the civil and human rights abuses perpetrated by federal agents on Haitian migrants on the border at Del Rio, and direct the respective federal agencies to adopt guidelines and practices to protect the civil and human rights of Haitians and other migrant populations and afford them due process.

¹ Biden admin seeks contractor to run migrant detention facility at Gitmo, guards who speak Creole, (NBC News, Sept. 22, 2021) <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/biden-admin-seeks-contractor-run-migrant-detention-facility-gitmo-guards-n1279886>

² There is multimedia [documentation](#) of CBP officers on horseback appearing to use reins to whip Haitians ferrying food across the river to their families in Del Rio. Yesterday, we saw [footage](#) of refugees being fenced in like sardines under a bridge while what sounded like gunfire ricocheted about. This treatment and these conditions are inhumane and criminal; and harken back to the days and trappings of the enslavement of Africans everywhere. This is absolutely disgraceful and unacceptable.



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2. Reaffirm the Biden Administration's commitment to Haitian Refugees by upholding the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) issued earlier this year, cease and desist the weaponization of Title 42, and grant [Humanitarian Parole](#) to all Haitians seeking refuge from natural disasters and political turmoil.³ Expand the TPS designation to cover those who recently arrived at our borders or grant them Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) and allow them to enter the United States under a grant of humanitarian parole to pursue protection. The right to seek asylum is a right enshrined in U.S. and international law. The United States should not shirk its legal obligation to protect and assist asylum seekers, and to ensure their right to do so with respect and dignity. Instead of prioritizing defensive and psycho-socially harmful CBP policies, we ask you provide resources to Haitian asylum-seekers at the border and give them the opportunity to seek asylum in a fair and just way, preferably within communities equipped to offer social and legal services, rather than in our troubled detention centers.

In addition, we ask President Biden to immediately create a Task Force via Executive Order directing the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice, and the FBI to make it a priority to investigate human and civil rights abuses on the migrants, including violence against Haitian asylum-seekers on the border in Del Rio by CBP, violence against women, and human trafficking concerns. The Task Force should direct

³ On May 22, 2021, Secretary Mayorkas announced a new Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Haiti allowing Haitians who have continuously been physically present in the U.S. since July 29, 2021, to apply for TPS status. The reason for the TPS designation was because of serious human rights violations and abuses under the Moïse Administration, which only worsened after the assassination of President Moïse on July 7, 2021. Further reasons for the TPS designation include but not limited to: serious security concerns, continual declining and worsening economic situation, and deteriorating healthcare; all intensified by the pandemic. These concerns in addition to crippling poverty, social and political unrest, gang violence, and lack of basic resources were further exacerbated by the recent earthquake (August 14, 2021) and tropical storms (August 16, 2021). The dire and dangerous conditions in Haiti are again confirmed by Mr. Daniel Foote, Special Envoy for Haiti [in his resignation letter](#) dated September 22, 2021. With such devastations, why are Haitians being turned away?



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the Department of Homeland Security to collaborate with stakeholders to improve training for CBP officers, enhance systems of documenting and reporting abuses, educate border patrol agents about violence against women and human trafficking, and institute disciplinary measures for officers who violate the civil and human rights of migrants.

It is imperative the leadership of this nation takes these concerns seriously and addresses the issues raised herein. We are in a moment of deep reckoning, and we are not where we should be as a nation committed to justice, humanity, and compassion. We hope each and every elected and appointed official within all levels of government will demonstrate their commitment to human, civil, and immigrant rights. We ask the Biden Administration to unequivocally denounce and extirpate racism and xenophobia in any form in any part of our government. We also ask this Administration to exercise its discretion to create pathways for Haitians to seek refuge in the United States.

Sincerely,
Marjorie Joseph
Executive Director, Houston Coalition Against Hate

Zenobia Lai
Executive Director, Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative

Justine Fanarof, JD, MPH
Board President, Houston Coalition Against Hate

