

Haitian Refugee Center/
Sant Réfijie Ayisyin, Inc.

Haiti
0407

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MIAMI, FLORIDA 33137
P.O. BOX 370543
PHONE (305) 757-8538

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WASHINGTON OFFICE

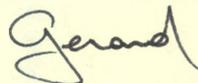
February 27, 1986

Honorable Congressman William Lehman
2347 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Lehman:

For your information, please find enclosed a letter to Mr. Perry Rivkind, Immigration & Naturalization Services, District Director for South Florida.

Sincerely,



Father Gerard Jean-Juste
Executive Director

GJJ:cl

Enclosure

cc: Local Office
2020 N.E. 163rd Street
North Miami Beach, Fl. 33162

Haitian Refugee Center/ Sant Réfijie Ayisyin, Inc.

32 NORTH EAST 54 STREET
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33137
P.O. BOX 370543

February 12 , 1986

PHONE (305) 757-8538

Perry Rivkind, District Director
Immigration and Naturalization Service
7880 Biscayne Blvd.
Miami, FL 33138

Hand-Delivery

Dear Mr. Rivkind:

On Friday February 7, 1986 former "President-for-Life" Jean-Claude Duvalier was removed from Haiti by a U.S. Air Force plane. The U.S. government's role in removing Duvalier is in reality a public acknowledgment of the despotism that has existed under the Duvalier family for the past twenty-eight years.

The withdrawal of official support is a much belated recognition of the political terror that exists in Haiti. A terror which allowed the Duvaliers to remain in power and which caused thousands of Haitians to risk their lives fleeing to other countries. Countless numbers of Haitians have drowned trying to sail to the U.S. in small boats. Others have secured false documents to hide their identities from Haitian immigration officials as they have escaped to haven in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Today about one hundred Haitians remain in U.S. immigration prisons waiting for final decisions on their requests for asylum. Several Haitians have now been detained for almost three years just outside of Miami at the Krome facility.

While there is much happiness and hope that Haiti will in the coming years be able to control its own destiny without interference from outsiders, there is also great concern over the members of the new government in Port-au-Prince. There has been no revolution in Haiti. There has not been a coup. Duvalier himself transferred his presidency to a small group of close associates, mostly high ranking military officials. While much has been said about the infamous Tonton Macoutes over the years, the Haitian Army has not been an innocent bystander. The Army has been a faithful friend of Duvalier and the Tonton Macoutes. It has provided support in many ways. The Army controls two of the most notorious political prisons in Haiti: Fort Dimanche and the Casernes Dessalines. In fact, it was Army troops that fired upon peaceful students in Gonaives in November 1985, killing several. It was this event which was a major factor in the growing protests which forced Duvalier to leave.

The new government has made several promising statements to the international news media about liberalization. They have even indicated that the Tonton Macoutes will be disbanded. Unfortunately the Tonton Macoutes were disbanded once before when Jean-Claude Duvalier took over from his father. Disbanding the Tonton Macoutes in 1971 was merely an attempt at misleading human

rights organizations and countries which donate aid to Haiti. The Tonton Macoutes were actually only renamed, given new uniforms, and sent back to their deadly business, crushing all opposition, real and imagined.

By hailing these announcements of the new Haitian government, the U.S. State Department has finally admitted that those who have fled Haiti were not motivated solely by desires to increase standards of living. The U.S. is now confronted with the issue of what to do with those Haitians who have understandably fled Duvalier's terror. While many detained Haitians at Krome and elsewhere dream of returning to Haiti, there is also a fear that nothing has changed. It will take weeks, if not months to see whether the Army generals running Haiti will back up their words with action.

Until such time no one can be sent back to Haiti. Those who were here in the United States on or before February 7, 1986 should be immediately released from their indefinite detention. If the Duvalier regime is fully and completely dismantled in the upcoming months, then all will be able to return without fearing for their lives.

In the meantime, those who are in detention should no longer be punished and should be immediately paroled in light of the U.S. government's recognition of the terror they have fled.

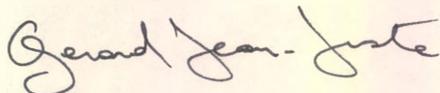
Therefore, on behalf of the detainees at Krome, we ask INS to parole all Haitians now detained who arrived on or before February 7, 1986. Arrangements with the voluntary agencies and HRC can be made to facilitate the resettlement of Haitians starting with those held for the longest periods.

I am also aware of the fact that you have extended an invitation to other organizations in the Haitian community to come and verify the desires on the part of some of the Haitians held at Krome to return to Haiti. In light of the fact that HRC represents many of the detained individuals, we request that you also permit HRC to speak with the detainees under conditions similar to those which will be extended to representatives of the other organizations.

I ask that you respond to this request to speak with the detained Haitians as soon as possible. Should HRC not receive a response from you by 4:00 P.M. today, we shall treat the failure to respond as a denial of the request.

I look forward to your response regarding our request to parole the detained Haitians at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Father Gerard Jean-Juste
Executive Director

GJJ:cl