

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS



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LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

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February 24, 1992

Congressman William Lennart
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I urge your support for H.R. 3844, the Haitian Refugee Protection Act of 1992.

H.R. 3844 will grant a six-month suspension of the forced repatriation of those Haitians who arrived at Guantanamo Bay on or before February 5th. The bill also requires the State Department to conduct a study to determine the extent to which human rights violations may have occurred to the Haitians who have already been repatriated.

Under current circumstances, Congressional action to temporarily suspend forced repatriations would be both prudent and compassionate. The AFL-CIO urges such action. A statement on Haiti by the AFL-CIO Executive Council is attached.

Sincerely,

Robert M. McGlotten, Director
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATION

attachment

Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council

on

Haiti

February 17, 1992
Bal Harbour, FL

Since the military coup of September 30, 1991, thousands of Haitian refugees have risked death on the high seas to escape mounting oppression by their dictatorship. The coup that toppled Haiti's democratically-elected President has resulted in the death of hundreds and the imprisonment of thousands of Haitian citizens.

The AFL-CIO has reliable reports of military repression against Haiti's trade union movement, whose leaders and activists have been killed, beaten or jailed. Today, trade union offices are under surveillance and union leaders live in a climate of fear. Despite such political terror, the Administration has now begun forcibly to return Haitian refugees to their homeland. Repatriated Haitians have told U.N. representatives of harassment since their return. There is no question that Haitian refugees are fleeing their country for more than the hope of attaining a higher standard of living.

The AFL-CIO calls on the Administration to reverse its policy of forced repatriation of Haitian refugees. Whatever the ultimate disposition of their cases, Haitian refugees should be given temporary shelter during this period of repression. The AFL-CIO urges Congress to pass legislation to grant these refugees sanctuary.

The AFL-CIO condemns the Administration's decision to lift a highly effective economic embargo against Haiti's military regime at the urging of U.S. corporate interests. The Administration's unilateral action weakens the Organization of American States embargo and strengthens the hand of Haiti's dictatorship. Haitian democrats, including trade union leaders, believe the embargo needs to be strengthened not weakened.

The forced repatriation of Haitian refugees coupled with the lifting of an economic embargo on the Haitian military represents an ill-conceived policy of punishing the victims while rewarding the tyrants.

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