

What Will Become of Undocumented Haitians in the DR?

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A deadline for Haitians living in the Dominican Republic to register with government offices or else risk deportation passed on June 17. The deadline was set following a 2013 Supreme Court decision that retroactively stripped Dominican citizenship from some people of Haitian descent who were born in the Dominican Republic. What does the future hold for those who registered, and for those who did not? What impact are Haitians having on the Dominican Republic's economy? How is the controversy affecting bilateral relations, and how is the international community viewing the developments?

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Ernest H. Preeg, chairman of the Haiti Democracy Project and former U.S. ambassador to Haiti:

“The harassment and potential expulsion of as many as 600,000 undocumented Haitians working in the Dominican Republic, some of whom were born there, is not only causing severe human suffering for the Haitians, but localized disruption in the Dominican economy. One result is bribes to soldiers and immigration officials to allow longstanding Haitian day workers to continue to cross the border. The expulsion of undocumented Haitians should be suspended to give the Haitian workers adequate time to be documented based on reasonable criteria, such as years worked in the Dominican Republic. If not, the situation could worsen, with official harassment leading to violence. Another result is a deepening political divide between the two countries that share the island. Anti-Dominican rhetoric is reaching high decibels in Haiti. The thousands of destitute and hungry Haitians returning add to the terrible job-creating performance of the Haitian economy, with the government more and more influenced by criminal elements that are happy to denounce and blame the Dominican Republic as an evil neighbor. The United States and other nations in the region should severely criticize the Dominican policy and call for a prolonged suspension of expulsions. Such criticism should include warnings of adverse economic and other impact on the Dominican relationship if the expulsions continue.”