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January 14, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Clinton  
 US Department of State  
 Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
 US Department of Homeland Security  
 Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Clinton and Secretary Napolitano:

I write to convey my concerns regarding one important aspect of the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) applauds the rapid response of the US government to this crisis, the designation of the Administrator of USAID as the government's unified disaster coordinator and the recent decision by the Department of Homeland Security to suspend the removal of Haitians in the US back to their home country. However, we believe that the US government response to the crisis should also include granting of Temporary Protective Status (TPS) to Haitians residing in the US as well as the cessation of forced return of those intercepted at sea as they flee the country.

The current situation in Haiti clearly fits the criteria for the granting of Temporary Protected Status. There is precedent for the application of TPS in other natural disasters, including to citizens of Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998 and El Salvador in 2001. It is evident that the infrastructure in Haiti is not adequate to support the safe return of Haitian nationals at this time. In addition, remittances from US based relatives are a critical source of ongoing economic support for the Haitian people. We ask that the Administration move quickly to exercise its authority under INA section 244 (b)(1)(B) to grant TPS to Haitians citizens in the United States.

The IRC has a long history of working with Haitian refugees and asylum seekers in the United States helping them to rebuild their lives. Our organization has a deep and abiding concern for the welfare of the Haitian people wherever they are, and we are moving expeditiously to respond to the humanitarian crisis inside Haiti. But this one critical element of the overall response requires your immediate attention.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter, and I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you or your staff to discuss it further.

Sincerely,

George Rupp

GR/bb