

Attorney General Raoul Leads Coalition Voicing Concern Over Disparate Treatment Of Haitian Refugees

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CHICAGO – Attorney General Kwame Raoul along with District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford, New York Attorney General Letitia James, and U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General Denise George, led a coalition of 17 attorneys general in sending a letter to President Joe Biden and Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas of the Department of Homeland Security expressing concern over the treatment of thousands of Haitian refugees currently seeking humanitarian aid along the border in Texas. Raoul and the coalition also urged the administration to reevaluate its rush to unfairly expel refugees to Haiti.

[In their letter](#), Raoul and the coalition are calling on the Biden administration to ensure that federal officials treat Haitian refugees with dignity and compassion. The attorneys general also are urging the administration to exercise its authority to give Haitian nationals seeking refuge in the United States the same due process other immigrants and refugees receive by assessing each Haitian refugee on a case-by-case basis, rather than continuing a disparate immigration policy that rushes the repatriation of Haitian refugees to a country that has suffered from political unrest after the assassination of their president and a humanitarian crisis on the heels of a devastating earthquake and tropical storm.

“The images of the treatment of Haitian refugees at the border are appalling and upsetting. It is also particularly disturbing that these refugees could face greater harm because they were deprived of the due process other immigrants receive and instead are being almost immediately repatriated to a country in crisis,” Raoul said. “Haitian refugees who have fled trauma and extreme hardship after several devastating natural disasters and political upheaval following the assassination of their president deserve to be treated with compassion and fairness while seeking refuge in the United States. As an Attorney General and as the proud son of Haitian immigrants, I am calling on our federal government to do better.”

In recent days, photographs and video have emerged of U.S. immigration officials using inhumane tactics, including charging at and attempting to whip Haitian refugees, in Del Rio, Texas. This comes as thousands of refugees continue to flee Haiti as the country faces unprecedented political upheaval following this summer’s presidential assassination and struggles to rebuild critical infrastructure after a destabilizing August earthquake.

In the letter, Raoul and the coalition commend the federal government’s commitment to investigating the inhumane tactics of U.S. immigration officials in Texas and for its recent decision to increase the number of refugees who will be allowed into the United States. However, Raoul and the coalition also express concern over the continuation of a summary deportation policy that is forcing many Haitian refugees seeking asylum or

other humanitarian assistance in the United States to return to Haiti without any consideration of the legitimacy of their claims for asylum.

Raoul and the coalition assert that Haitian refugees deserve the same due process as all other individuals attempting to immigrate or flee to the United States, and the circumstances of every Haitian seeking refuge in the United States should be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The attorneys general argue that this individualized evaluation should factor in both the time a person has been away from Haiti and the circumstances he or she will likely face if forced to return amid Haiti's current humanitarian and governance crises.

Raoul and the coalition note that the federal government has several tools at its disposal to address the dire conditions Haitian refugees are facing in Del Rio, including the president's ability to exercise discretionary refugee admission authority during a humanitarian crisis. In the event of an unforeseen emergency refugee situation, the president has authority to designate a number of refugees to be admitted into the United States that is separate from the annual cap on immigrants allowed into the U.S. Raoul and the attorneys general point out that the admission of Haitian refugees is justified by the grave humanitarian concerns currently facing the people of Haiti.

Raoul and the coalition also suggest that the administration could invoke country-specific measures to allow these migrants to legally remain in the United States while conditions in their country of origin are too hazardous for them to safely return. Additionally, the U.S. attorney general may parole a refugee into the United States. Raoul and the coalition argue that the administration should exercise its discretion, which the law expressly provides, to demonstrate compassion and fairness in the treatment of those Haitians seeking refuge in our country.

Joining Attorneys General Raoul, Racine, Ellison, Ford, James, and George in sending the letter are the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.