HAITI - PROFILE OF ASYLUM CLAIMS AND COUNTRY CONDITIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This profile is provided by the State Department's Office of Asylum Affairs for use by the Executive Office of Immigration Review and the Immigration and Naturalization Service in assessing asylum claims. By federal regulation, the Department of State may provide information on country conditions to help adjudicators assess the accuracy of asylum applicants' assertions about country conditions and their own experiences; likely treatment were the applicants to return; whether persons similarly situated are known to be persecuted; whether grounds for denial are known to exist; and other information relevant to determining the status of a refugee under the grounds specified in section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Country conditions profiles are produced by the Office of Asylum Affairs under the supervision of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), formerly the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. They are written by experienced Foreign Service Officers with expertise and service in the relevant area and are circulated for comment within the Department, including to overseas missions, and with other agencies if appropriate. They are based on a review of asylum applications, reports from US missions abroad and other information available to the Department of State. Other relevant information published by the Department, incorporated here with by reference, includes the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and the annual World Refugee Report. Country Reports are designed to report annually on the status of internationally recognized human rights; these profiles, which are updated regularly, provide additional and current information relevant to the specific standards set forth in the INA.

II. OVERVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Situation in 1993 To provide context to these comments, the introductory paragraphs of the 1993 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in Haiti (published in early February 1994) are repeated below.

"The Haitian military has effectively ruled the country since its unconstitutional, violent overthrow and expulsion of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in September 1991. From January to August (1993) Haiti was ruled by an unconstitutional de facto regime, the second since the coup. On July 3 (1993) the military high command signed an agreement with President Aristide on Governor's Island, New York to restore the constitutional order. Pursuant to that accord, on August 30, Prime Minister Robert Malval, appointed by President Aristide, was sworn into office. The military high command failed to respect the provisions of the Governor's Island Accord, which delayed full implementation by the end of the year. Malval held de jure power throughout the period but was unable to effect full control of the government, and actual power remained in the hands of the military and its supporters. Ministers in the Malval government were often
prevented from carrying out their duties by threats, violence, and
der other forms of intimidation. On October 14 (1993), Justice Minister
Guy Malary was killed in downtown Port-au-Prince. Although the
killers had not been identified by year's end, there is strong reason
to believe that they were supporters of the military. Prime Minister
Mialval resigned on December 15, in keeping with his announced
intentions, but stayed on as acting Prime Minister pending appointment
of a replacement.

"The Haitian Armed Forces, which have considerable legal and
institutional autonomy, are responsible for law enforcement and public
security. The police, all of whom are stationed in Port-au-Prince,
are an integral part of the armed forces. In both urban and rural
areas, armed forces units serve as police, despite a constitutional
requirement to separate these two bodies. Paramilitary personnel in
civilian clothes (known as "attaches" in the city and "section chiefs"
and "adjoints" in rural areas) conduct most of the intimidation and
violent repression for both the police and the army. Military,
police, and paramilitary personnel committed numerous serious human
rights violations with impunity in 1993."

"The Haitian economy is characterized by severe overpopulation
vis-a-vis ever dwindling arable land due to environmental devastation,
high infant mortality, a heavy dependence on imports and foreign
assistance, a predominantly rural population living on rapidly eroding
land, wide disparities of income, and a small manufacturing base.
While never strong, the economy declined in recent years, owing to
political instability and government mismanagement. That decline
continued in 1993 and was intensified by the Organization of American
States' (OAS) trade embargo and the United Nations' fuel embargo, as
well as the suspension of all but international humanitarian
assistance following the 1991 coup.

"Haitians suffered human rights abuses throughout 1993,
including political and extrajudicial killings by the security forces
and their allies, disappearances, beatings and other mistreatment of
detainees and prisoners, arbitrary arrest and detention, executive
interference with the judicial process, and continued infringement of
the rights of citizens to change their government. More than 200
civilian human rights observers from the United Nations and the OAS
were deployed throughout the country through October when they were
withdrawn due to perceived threats and intimidation. Their presence
temporarily helped curb political violence and human rights
violations, but indiscriminate violence remained substantial,
especially in rural areas, where two-thirds of Haitians live. There
was a substantial increase in crimes of violence, including politically motivated killings, beginning in July and August, as
tensions rose over the Governors Island accords and military efforts
to derail their implementation. Most of the violence is directed at
stopping the transition to democracy."

Situation to April 1994 Since the mid-October 1993 prevention
by a group of armed "attaches" of the landing of U.S. engineering
soldiers, the murder of Aristide's Justice Minister, renewed outbreaks
of violence on the streets of Port-au-Prince, the reimposition of the
UN embargo (including petroleum) enforced by warships, and the evacuation of most international human rights monitoring personnel from the provinces have signaled a worsening human rights climate in Haiti—one in which fear and uncertainty predominate. In-country observers, including again some 40 UN/OAS human rights monitors, report a recrudescence of repression continuing into 1994 with increased frequency and brutality, including the murder, rape, and beating of political opponents, now including some rank-and-file former Aristide supporters and other innocent citizens in Port-au-Prince's slum neighborhoods, by local authorities and their agents, in the capital and provinces alike.

Economic Situation in Haiti Today Economic conditions in Haiti are grim. Haiti is by far the poorest country in the Americas. Per-capita GNP was $252 U.S. (1993), by far the lowest in the Western Hemisphere, and declining by about 10 percent annually. About 85 percent of Haiti's population lives in abject poverty. Inflation is running at 60 percent. Most people do not have ready access to safe drinking water, adequate medical care, or sufficient food. 50 percent of the work force is considered unemployed/underemployed, and the lack of employment opportunities remains one of the most critical problems.

III. COMMENTS ON MOST FREQUENTLY OCCURRING CLAIMS

Most applicants claim at least some participation in activities during the December 1990 election in which Aristide was elected President and/or in grassroots organizations which burgeoned under his seven months in power. Consequent mistreatment at the hands of the military or the quasi-military attaches is claimed, frequently after demonstrations and generally involving an attempted or realized arrest at the applicant's home. Others who left Haiti before Aristide came to power say that they left because they opposed the governments of the particular era and were sought out by military or by their henchmen the "tonton-macoutes." The oral account is usually the sole basis of the claim. Comments on particular aspects of the most common claims follow:

1: Aristide/FNCD supporters Persons who were prominent supporters of President Aristide as well as most current open and activist supporters of his return, especially if they engage in public political activities, are likely to be at risk. Individual targets include persons the military fears as sources of potential opposition, such as, but not limited to, influential Aristide supporters. There have been and continue to be arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions, and "disappearances" of such individuals. However, Aristide won the election with 67 percent of the vote, a total of 1,107,125 citizens, and we have no credible information that minor election activity or simple support for him in 1990-91 has caused targeting for reprisal. Nevertheless, post-coup political activities which could be seen as publicly challenging the current authorities could well lead to retribution, and a claim of a significant history of such activity opens an important avenue of inquiry. In early 1994 there have been indiscriminate attacks, killings, rapes, and beatings by agents of the authorities on presumed supporters of the ousted President and other innocent citizens in underclass neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince considered Aristidist bastions.
2 Relatives of Aristide supporters Although some relatives of prominent Aristide supporters have claimed that they are also in danger, our information indicates that prior to 1994 it was unusual for such relatives to be threatened or harmed solely because of their familial relationship. The danger to friends and relatives of prominent Aristide supporters who have been harmed seems to have resulted from their having been in the vicinity of targeted persons when the violence occurred. In 1994, credible reports of rapes, murders, and kidnappings of those related to rank-and-file Aristidists have been encountered.

3 PDCH (Sylvio Claude) members Despite the horrible death of PDCH leader Sylvio Claude at the hands of a mob at the inception of the coup, members of the Parti Democratique Chretien d'Haiti, which gathered 50,000 presidential votes in the election in which Aristide became president, have not been sought out and harassed. Now without a charismatic leader, albeit with several deputies in the Congress, the party poses no threat to the military's enjoyment of power.

4 MIDH (Marc Bazin) Supporters Currently, having been associated with the MIDH should cause no problems. The MIDH was the party of the Prime Minister of the de facto government of Haiti during June 1992 to June 1993. Former Prime Minister Bazin himself is currently living quietly in Port-au-Prince.

5 RNDP (Leslie Manigat) Supporters Past involvement in politics in Manigat's Rassemblement National des Democrats Progressistes is unlikely to cause an applicant problems under current country conditions. On June 19, 1988, President Manigat was deposed by a coup led by General Henri Namphy. Manigat, who was ruled ineligible to run again for President during the 1990 elections, lives in comfort today in Port-au-Prince, while the man who ousted him is in exile. During 1992/93, Manigat assumed the role of a gadfly to the de facto government of Marc Bazin, but has not engaged the public in support of his initiatives. We have no reports of Manigat followers or their families being targeted at this time.

6 Followers of Rony Lafontant (URN) Lafontant, a former Interior Minister in the Duvalier government and head of the "tonton-macoutes" (g.v.), returned to Haiti in the summer before the December 1990 elections but was disqualified from running by the electoral commission. Following a coup attempt designed to prevent Aristide from taking office, he was captured immediately, tried, and imprisoned. On the first night of the anti-Aristide coup, he was killed in his prison cell. We have no credible report that Lafontant's followers are in particular danger from the authorities because of their political orientation. In some cases inquiry should be made into applicants' own past activities in support of Lafontant, given the leader's unsavory record.

7 Duvalierists Since the overthrow of Jean-Claude Duvalier there have been several governments of widely different political tendencies, including several of a conservative hue, which includes the current de facto authorities. The current atmosphere in Haiti is not unfavorable to persons of this political background and there is
little likelihood of relatives of former Duvalierists to be harmed solely because of their familial relationship.

8 Persons who Left during the Duvaliers (1957-86) Since the Duvalier regime, no less than seven governments of different political characteristics have intervened. Whatever the truth of the allegations made by most applicants having left during this period, the authorities are less interested in pursuing historical Duvalierist grudges and more in the practical matter of staying in power by preventing organized resistance by partisans of President Aristide.

9 Persons who Left during the Duvalier-Aristide Interregnum (1986-1990) When departure from Haiti took place during the 1986-90 regimes, successor governments include (General Namphy's first presidency (7 Feb 86 to 7 Feb 88), the regimes of Leslie Manigat (Feb to 19 June 88), Namphy "two" (June to 17 Sep 88), Gen. Avril (Sep to 10 Mar 89), Trouillot (13 Mar 90 to 7 Feb 91), Aristide (Feb to 30 Sep 91). The de facto governments of Nerette/Honorat (7,9 Oct 91 to May 92) and Bazin (19 June 92 to 8 June 93) and currently the tenuous prime-ministership of Aristide's designate Malval (since 30 August 1993) have followed. We do not believe the fact that an ordinary citizen is known to oppose or have opposed these earlier rulers puts that person at particular risk of mistreatment or abuse. It has been many years since some of those leaders and their families left the country, and later personalities, hopes, and animosities have moved to the fore.

10 Poll Watchers (Mandateurs) While there was much political upheaval at the time of the aborted elections of November 1987, those of December 16, 1990 were held in a far more peaceful atmosphere. Those elections were internationally supervised (around 1,400 observers) with some 14,000 polling stations established throughout Haiti. There were few administrative irregularities due to inexperience with the procedures, but the elections delivered a result believed to be fair by all.

The political parties assigned many poll-watchers (mandateurs) to the 14,000 polling places around the country. Being a mandateur was a designation which was handed out freely and does not connote any high internal party authority or visibility. FNCD (the party under whose device Aristide campaigned) activists in Haiti told the embassy that almost 50,000 written mandate papers were issued, the majority between December 14 and 16, 1990. Being a mandateur was an insignificant position and would not alone bring on police surveillance or reprisals, in the embassy's considerable experience in examining claims of mistreatment. One mayor of a sizeable town told embassy officers that he had issued no less than 5,000 of these papers to potential voters in the days before the elections. He said (in March 1992) that he knew of no instance in which someone who was simply a former mandateur - with no other political activities - had been targeted for persecution. It should be noted also that very many of the rather simply constructed mandate letters are fabrications done either in Haiti or the USA.
Members of a community action group. While we typically have little information on the many micro-groups in which applicants claim membership, it is a fact that in Haiti after the overthrow of the Duvaliers (1986) and particularly after the election of President Aristide (December 1990) neighborhood associations sprang up all over the country. With civic self-empowerment tasks such as street cleaning, building painting, literacy campaigns, and reforestation, many of them became the focus of civic activity. After the coup the military severely restricted public assembly and systematically inhibited any type of association. As a result most of these groups have become inactive. Some claimed groups are very small (less than ten people), and others consist largely of family members. In attempting to corroborate these claims in the communities in which the applicants lived, the organizations and their leaders seldom can be formally verified; the group seems to be uniquely referenced in a particular application and not encountered elsewhere. When the goals and activities of a particular group are only described generally and in a standardized way, it is possible that the claim of membership in and activities of the group may be overstated.

IV. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADJUDICATORS

A False and Exaggerated Claims by Some Previous Returnees. While, as noted above, there were and continue to be severe human rights abuses in Haiti, investigations by U.S. Embassy officers there indicate that many of the reports made by asylum applicants concerning arrests, killings, and intimidation are unconfirmable. Through late 1993, the Embassy monitoring program had interviewed family members, friends, and neighbors of more than 4,000 returnees without encountering sustainable, credible claims of reprisal or mistreatment by authorities after their return to Haiti related directly or indirectly to either their departure or involuntary return.

B Claimed killings of family members or close associates. In reviewing cases which depend on claims that close family members or associates were killed or caused to disappear by the authorities or others, a careful effort should be made to establish the facts and verify the credibility of the applicant. Some such claims are undoubtedly true — e.g. at least 300-400 politically related deaths primarily during the immediate post-Aristide violence. We note that the Embassy in Port-au-Prince over the past two years and a half has found in checking out the veracity of a number of refugee/asylee claims which were specific enough to be verifiable, that such allegations, particularly where several killings are said to have happened, have a tendency to be untrue or greatly elaborated. Some substantiated deaths can be related to natural causes or non-political violence, which is endemic. Many people have left home for other parts of the country or for destinations abroad, so disappearances are not always suspicious. In the absence of a working judicial system, others have resorted to violence to settle all manner of disputes. The names, ages, and addresses of the deceased or disappeared person, the names of witnesses, and the precise location and circumstances of the deaths are routinely not found in written asylum applications.
C Exiles are not a mistreated social group While people fleeing or emigrating from the ex-communist countries were often seen as "traitors" by their regimes, Haiti is different. The Haitian "diaspora" is commonly referred to as the "Dixieme Departement" (tenth province), reflecting the strength of the family and economic ties between Haitians across the seas. One Haitian in six lives abroad, and many tens of thousands travel back and forth between Haiti, the USA, Canada, and France with no trouble. Neither Haitians nor the authorities regard seeking a better life overseas as subversive or return from overseas to be grounds for mistreatment.

D Current Situation of Students Students in Haiti have participated in political activities and been confronted by the police, particularly in the capital and particularly among university students, who are concentrated in an area which happens, in the case of Haiti, to be right outside the doors of the consular section of the embassy. After the ouster of Aristide, schools around the country were closed by the government and by church authorities for several months, reopening, in general, in January 1992. The school term ran its course until late May through July as Marc Bazin, Aristide's major opponent in the 1990 elections, became prime minister of the de facto government. This caused serious, if sporadic, student-police confrontations in Port-au-Prince, which sputtered out during the summer break. Schools reopened in October 1992 with a minimum of disorder. In December 1992 the four faculties of the university were closed temporarily due to disturbances. Provincial schools, Port-au-Prince schools, and university graduate schools are currently open, insofar as the worsening economic situation has not led to their closing. Recent high school and university graduates found job prospects even more limited than in normal times due to the embargo, which has continued for over two years.

E "Zenglendos" (Gangsters) Critical to the evaluation of certain cases is the political coloration attached to mistreatment by "zenglendos." This politically-tinged Haitian word is applied primarily to night-time burglars. The danger seems to be a function of number, weapons, and presumed or actual police/military connection. While not all thieves are necessarily "zenglendos," over the years it has been a practice of the local police to allow for a price certain individuals to plunder neighborhoods. It is also possible for the police to engage in the conduct directly themselves. Whether or not there was or is likely to be political follow-up to a break-in or robbery in which pro-Aristide material is discovered by a particular group of "zenglendos" may have to be elicited in closer questioning.

F The Tonton Macoutes (or Sans-Man-mans) The term "makout," so dreaded in the time of the Duvaliers (1957-1986) when it was coined and when the practitioners were issued special uniforms and grouped into paramilitary formations called the VSN or "Volontaires pour le Service National," has lost much of its former applicability and precision. The VSN was officially disbanded in 1985. Today the term "makout" can cover a range of people, some with connections to former governments, some with current links. The people known as "attaches" of the section chiefs and the army/police when they go out in force,
are perhaps their closest spiritual descendants. But the term has also been generalized by its constantly being invoked as an expletive for rough-handed common criminals or for people (sometimes of higher social station or of more conservative bent) with whom one strongly disagrees. A derivative group-appellation is the Sans-Man-mans. Literally the "bastards," this designation is used by and about the hooligans in St. Marc and the Artibonite Valley. Fulfilling much of the extrajudicial "bully-boy" role of the "tonton macoutes" in other parts of the country, they have also intervened in the internecine struggles over land rights that characterize the Valley.

G The FRAPH. The neo-duvalierist Front Revolutionnaire pour l'Avancement et Progres d'Haiti first appeared in mid-September 1993 marching in the streets of Port-au-Prince against the embargo. By mid-October it had won its spurs by a highly effective general strike against the Malval government and then by personifying the military authorities' resistance to the disembarkation of U.S. and Canadian soldiers from the "Harlan County." It first appears to have been day-hire bully-boys, but with the mid-October 1993 murder of the Justice Minister right after the "Harlan County" incident it started to become an organized political force and has spread to the countryside as well. The FRAPH is a disturbing phenomenon, representing the first time since the ousting of Aristide that the military de-facto authorities behind the scene have tried to set up a base of civilian support. The FRAPH appears to be the latter-day equivalent of the VSN or tonton-macoutes, equally political and subservient to those in power, but also about which the military is somewhat nervous as well.

H Broadcasting of Applicants' Names on the Radio. Such accounts, other than an October 1991 request by name for Aristide's bodyguards to turn in their weapons and the reading of 100 Aristidists' names during a well-known "Radio VSN" broadcast of 18 December 1991, cannot be verified. Where the "exposed" applicant's only contact with Aristidist politics had been membership in one of the thousands of local committees, or poll-watching, or simple support for Aristide, the numbers of similarly-situated people would be in the order of tens of thousands. The reading of any such lists over national radio would normally be expected to have seized the attention of the embassy, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service in Key West, and the various Haitian and foreign human rights groups. However, none of these sources has recorded such activities, with the exceptions mentioned above.

I Airport Police Records System. Claims that the police have an applicant's picture, fingerprints, records, etc. and would stop him at the airport are difficult to establish. Unless an applicant were a public figure, it would be unlikely that the airport police have any useable photographs for identifying wanted entrants. The exit-and-reentry visa system of the Duvalier days wherein Haitian citizens had to obtain a "visa" to leave their country was scrapped several years ago. Today, Haitian immigration at the airport appears to lack accessible data of any wide scope. Other asylee accounts and on-the-ground experience by negotiators, newsmen, would-be-exiles, and embassy personnel suggest that notoriety or happenstance (personal recognition by an inspector at the airport) is the factor most likely to lead to an airport detention or arrest.
J  Varying Recent Levels of Violence in Haiti  Immediately following the coup d'etat against Aristide, when the army first clamped down against his followers and their organizations, violence, particularly in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien, reached a high level. 300-400 people were killed in politically-motivated repression. Following the weeks of October/November, levels of violence fell considerably, albeit repression has continued to be strong. Rumors of a return of Aristide in December/January 91/92 and the appointment of Marc Bazin as Prime Minister in May 1992 resulted in lesser instances of violence. During 1992 the toll of politically-motivated deaths is estimated by the embassy to have been in the dozens. The year 1993 followed the pattern of 1992, with intense repression of public gatherings and the level of politically motivated killings reported to be around five per month. From April 1993 onwards the level of beatings, illegal jailings, and extortions declined somewhat in most of the eight provincial towns which received resident UN/OAS human rights teams. After the 3 July 1993 Governor's Island agreement to restore Aristide to power, repression, arrests, beatings, and targeted killings increased in Port-au-Prince and throughout the country, and in mid-October 1993 the International Civilian Mission observers were withdrawn. The current danger to the average individual of politically motivated targeted killing, beating, or illegal detention may still be less than it was at the time of the coup itself. However, in early 1994 the police/military had established a general pattern of deliberately eliminating adversaries, leading to a pattern of violence and intimidation including almost nightly raids on poor neighborhoods. Throughout the post-coup period, "first amendment" rights (especially of assembly, less so of the written press and radio) continue to be tightly controlled.

K  Immediate Post-Coup Demonstrations against the Regime  The embassy has verified that in some areas of Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien, Gonaives, and Les Cayes people took to the streets to protest and, if possible, to turn back the September 1991 coup—as they had assisted against the abortive Lafontant attempt the preceding January. In Cite Soleil, Lamentin, and other neighborhoods of Carrefour people who first came out to demonstrate were subjected to fierce repression by the military. Those willing to try to reverse the coup found, unlike at the time of Lafontant, that the army was firmly arrayed in favor of the coup, and they quickly desisted. After October 1, the second day of the coup, (and with Aristide now in exile) there were no mass attempts to overturn the military. Stories of demonstrations of hundreds in provincial towns cannot be verified and where investigated have been found to be untrue. Among students in Port-au-Prince there was a brief recrudescence of strike activity concerning the appointment as Prime Minister of Marc Bazin and various academic disagreements in May/June 1992. The police reacted with more restraint than against the urban poor during the previous autumn. No one, for instance, was killed in these demonstrations, and those jailed were released within days.

L  Pro-Aristide Demonstrations in 1992, 1993, & 1994  During 1992 and 1993, upon occasion there were pro-Aristide demonstrations. The police have been very quick to react against these, indeed against practically any gathering of people, by shooting in the air, beating
people with batons, and often mauling and arresting people. The usual result of an arrest is a beating, an overnight in jail and release, often upon the payment of a bribe. Claims for 1992 that people were afterwards sought out and murdered by the authorities for past participation in such gatherings should be compared with the Amnesty International estimate that about 100 people were killed in that year for politically-motivated reasons and the embassy estimate that such killings were in the dozens. In 1994, the increase in repression militates against any public expression of support for Aristide.

M Human Rights Abuse On Account of Five Protected Grounds Haiti's continuing wretched human rights record stems in part from endemic conditions such as corruption, poverty, exploitation and ignorance, which are more structural than "political" in the sense it is normally considered. Committing or exploiting abuses for personal, institutional, and partisan ends is common. The relationship of these abuses to the five protected grounds under the Refugee Convention is often not clarifiable.

V. TREATMENT OF APPLICANTS IF THEY RETURN

Since the coup, there have been very few substantiated reports, with the exception below, that persons returned to Haiti by the U.S. under the interdiction program, who total over 30,000 people since Aristide's departure, are subject to punishment by Haitian authorities solely for attempted departure. Smuggling "boat people," however, is illegal and those suspects may be interrogated, and some detained, at most for about forty-eight hours. Reports that persons deported or excluded from the United States after having unsuccessfully sought asylum here or after attempting illegal entry are detained or subjected to punishment by the Haitian authorities have not been substantiated, despite repeated inquiries of over 4,000 returnees by the Embassy during 1992, 1993, and 1994.

VI. IN-COUNTRY REFUGEE PROGRAM

It should be borne in mind that since 1992 we have had an in-country refugee program, one of four such in the world, operating out of three offices: in Port-au-Prince and in the North and Southwest of the country. Some 55,000 people have inquired, 15,000 have been interviewed, and almost 3,000 approved for refugee status, of which 2,000 have arrived in the USA. The average approval rate of those interviewed has been between 6 and 8 percent, although more recently a system of working directly with in-country human rights groups, church groups and others, has improved the ICP's ability to identify genuine refugees, and the approval rate rose (April 1994) to 19 percent.
VII. INTERNAL FLIGHT AND RELOCATION POSSIBILITIES

Despite generally high level of violence, it is possible for many people to take up safer residence in other parts of the country. Throughout the recent decades of Haiti's lawlessness, many thousands of people have migrated internally, primarily from the countryside to the cities. In times of urban trouble, many Haitians have moved back to their former abodes in other parts of the country. Estimates of this out-migration to rural areas by inhabitants of Port-au-Prince right after the coup range up to 300,000 persons. Many applicants from Port-au-Prince, for example, were born in other parts of the country and still have parents and other relatives living there. Equally, many rural families have members who have moved to the capital for economic betterment and who have been able to receive relatives from the provinces who may be seeking the anonymity of the city. Demographic studies, observation by embassy and human rights reporters, and the record in most asylum cases show that there has been extensive use of these and other alternative refuges. Currently the embassy believes that people displaced number in the thousands. In this connection it should be noted that the term "in hiding" is sometimes by applicants to indicate spending the night at one or several different addresses, while pursuing normal daytime routines.

VIII. ALTERNATIVE REASONS FOR MIGRATION

For many decades the major outlet for Haiti has been emigration; around one Haitian in six now lives abroad, and remittances from relatives overseas (which in pre-embarqo times amounted to a quarter of the receipts from exports of goods and services) for many families spells the difference between penury and starvation. Sending a family member to the United States has been called Haiti's "social security system." Annual net emigration from Haiti is about 5 in 1,000 persons, or 34,000 annually, according to U.S. Census Bureau analysis. With 6.5 million inhabitants, Haiti is the second most populous country in the Caribbean, and another million Haitians are reported to be working abroad, some in the Dominican Republic, Bahamas, France and Canada, but mostly in the U.S. The U.S. portion of the "diaspora" is largely of recent arrival, meaning that many Haitians are likely to have relatives here to help them become established. The human rights situation in Haiti is increasingly abusive, but its impact on the individual must also be considered in the context of this abysmal and worsening economic setting.

In 1992 the INS estimated that 98,000 Haitians were long term illegal residents in the US, including 59,600 in Florida and 21,400 in New York. In October, 1988, the estimated illegal Haitian population had been 58,000 and in the subsequent four years, there were an estimated 46,000 gross overstays, 5,000 adjustments or departures, 2,000 deaths and 1,000 entries without inspection—resulting in the estimate of 98,000 resident illegal Haitian aliens, an increase of about 12,000/year. A total of 292,559 Haitians have immigrated legally to the US, most of them recently: 138,379 from 1981-1990, 47,046 in 1991 and 10,756 in 1992. Nonimmigrant admissions from Haiti were 72,000 in FY 90, 64,000 in FY 91 and 42,000 in FY 92. (FY 92 admissions are low because the U.S. consular section was closed for non-immigrant and open only part-time for immigrant visas during that year.) 17,098 Haitian affirmative applications for asylum were pending adjudication on May 30, 1994.
In the past visa fraud has been high, resulting in a very high refusal rate for first-time applicants at the U.S. Embassy. Smuggling of Haitians occurs by boat for the very poor, but conditions are hazardous. Up to a thousand people are believed to have perished at sea during the 1991-92 boat-people movement and further drownings have continued in 1993 and 1994. People with wealth or stateside relatives are able to pay for false documents to board legitimate carriers or travel undocumented on fly-by-night planes and boats either directly or via way-stations to South Florida.

During the latter part of 1991 and early 1992, larger exoduses of fragile small craft led to close-in operations by the U.S. Coast Guard. Following court orders prohibiting return to Haiti of rescued boat-people, the cost of going to "Miami" dropped to a fraction of previous charges, and the danger factor of a long sea voyage generally ceased to operate. The chances of being screened in at Guantanamo were well known in Haiti due to extensive stateside publicity repeated into Haiti by local radio and stateside relatives of potential migrants. These factors led to greatly increased mixed-motive flows of people during this period.

Haitian refugees sent to third countries (notably Honduras and Venezuela) have preferred in over three quarters of the cases to return to Haiti if permanent resettlement in the United States was not possible.

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