

Background in the Bush Crackdown on Haitians

- In the past, Haitian refugees seeking political asylum in the U.S. would be detained until they were given a hearing, like most other 'foreigners'. Few were held for more than three months.
- In December 2001, the bush administration secretly changed its policy towards Haitian asylum seekers ONLY.
- Today, more than 250 Haitian refugees- including WOMEN and CHILDREN - are now being held in two detention facilities in South Florida, with no prospect of release. Most of them have been jailed since their boat ran aground near Miami on December 3, 2001. That was SEVEN months ago.
- The reason that the Bush administration officials gave for the secret shift in policy towards Haitians was to prevent a 'mass exodus' of Haitians into Florida.
- The Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center Inc. sued the INS in March; claiming the agency's policy was racist. The group asked for an injunction to stop the INS from treating Haitians differently than asylum seekers from other nations. On May 17th, after months of delay, a federal judge in Florida threw the case out, saying it was up to Bush and his advisors, not the courts. The case is now being appealed.
- Among those who have called on the US government to release the Haitians and end this discriminatory practice are: US Senator Ted Kennedy, Congressmen Mike Capuano and Stephen Lynch, AL Sharpton, U.S. Rep Carrie Meek of Miami, Florida, Senators Bill Nelson and Bob Graham.
- This week, the chairperson of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights visited the Florida detention centers and, saying that the policy "makes no sense", announced that the group planned to launch an investigation into the Bush policy
- The New York-based Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights says that the INS detention policy violates several United Nations statutes on the treatment of refugees.
- The National coalition for Haitians Rights, based in New York, has appealed to Haitians across the United States to call their elected officials and protest the detention of the Haitian Refugees.
- An ad-hoc committee of Haitian leaders and concerned friends in Boston plan to hold a peaceful demonstration to call on the immediate end of this discriminatory policy. All Haitians are asked to come to the protest, which will be held on Thursday July 25, 2002 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in front of John F. Kennedy

Federal Building in Government Center, Boston. Haitians are asked to bring signs and flags to help get the point across.

- Information compiled from news stories published