



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
April 20, 2011

The Honorable
Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Haitians who, fourteen months after the devastating earthquake of January 2010, remain homeless, unprotected and with little or no access to basic services. According to credible reports, many of Haiti's internally displaced people (IDPs) still have limited access to clean water and toilets, are living under flimsy tarps or bed sheets and have no prospect of finding adequate living facilities in the foreseeable future. We ask that the U.S. Administration act decisively to respond to this intolerable situation and work with the incoming government of Haiti and our international partners to ensure that the rights and vital needs of IDP communities are addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

Though Haiti's tent camps have received scant media attention in recent months, there is little indication that the alarming conditions in which displaced people have subsisted are improving, and observers consider that, in some cases, the situation is worsening. According to a January 22 study by U.S. and Haitian researchers, 38% of IDP camps still don't have regular access to water (down only 2.5 percentage points since August). Nearly a third of camps aren't equipped with toilets and, where toilets can be found, they are shared by an average of 273 people each (United Nations standards call for one toilet per 20 people). As a result, many camp residents remain highly vulnerable to fecal-borne diseases like cholera, which has killed over 4600 people and infected nearly a quarter of a million since October.

The shelter installations in which displaced Haitians live are progressively deteriorating given that the tents and tarps donated many months ago aren't designed to withstand the intense sun and heavy rain and wind of Haiti's tropical climate. Many families have had to settle for torn tents and tarps, and even bed sheets to protect themselves from the elements.

Another area of great concern is that of the security of camp residents. Few if any security measures have been taken in camps in order to protect the most vulnerable sectors from violent attacks, in particular gender-based violence. A recently published report by Amnesty International found that "the risk of rape and other forms of gender-based violence in Haiti's camps has increased dramatically in the past year." The report

goes on to state that “the lack of security in and around the camps is one of the main factors contributing to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence...” Simple measures like the installation of electric lighting in key areas of camps are rarely applied.

Finally, we are troubled by reports that an increasing number of IDPs are being forcibly evicted from camps with no other viable options of housing to turn to. In November of last year, the Inter American Commission on Human Rights recommended that a moratorium on expulsions from IDP camps be implemented and that those who have been “illegally expelled from the camps [be offered] a transfer to places that have minimum health and security conditions.” To date, these recommendations have not been put into practice and camp dwellers live in constant fear of being forced, often violently or through the threat of violence, from their camps to even more precarious locations. According to the Camp Management Cluster and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), around half of former camp residents have “left camp settings for precarious housing situations” and “one in four of all people living in IDP camps” are currently threatened with forced eviction.

The growing crisis in Haiti’s IDP camps will not go away on its own. In a matter of weeks, the rainy season will begin in earnest and, if nothing is done to improve IDP camp conditions, there is a strong chance that there will again be a spike in the number of cases of cholera and other water-borne diseases.

As our nation’s top diplomat we urge you to work with Haitian authorities and our international partners to ensure a speedy, short-term response to the immediate shelter, water, sanitation and security needs of the IDP population. While striving to develop transitional and permanent housing solutions for IDPs the United States, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the international community must also do everything in their power to support the government of Haiti in protecting these victims and ensuring that their minimum needs are met.

We must ensure that accountability and transparency is brought to the task of IDP assistance, in particular the efforts that are being undertaken by key international organizations such as the IOM, as well as our own U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The organizations that receive U.S. funding for their work with IDP camps must demonstrate that they are making concrete progress and attending the needs of the maximum number of camps. As the largest donor to the NGO community, we set the international standard. USAID has significant leverage with NGOs to enforce complete coverage of IDP communities, genuine local participation, and true collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental partner groups.

Last but not least, we must collaborate closely with Haitians themselves in this effort, and particularly the Haitians living in camps. If there is any constant in the criticism that has been directed at relief efforts in Haiti, it is that the international community has failed to adequately consult and coordinate with the Haitians receiving assistance. There are relatively easy policy solutions that could be immediately put into practice, such as

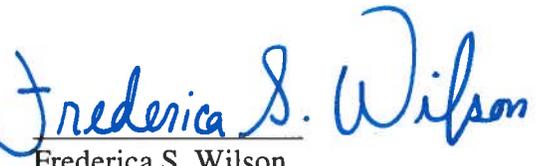
requiring contracting NGOs to consult with local governments and to hold "town hall" meetings in neighborhoods and in the IDP camps.

We thank you for the role you have played in providing a strong impetus to addressing the challenge of relief and reconstruction in Haiti. We sincerely hope that you will now dedicate significant attention to the critical and urgent task of improving the appalling conditions in IDP camps.

Sincerely,


Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress


Donald M. Payne
Member of Congress

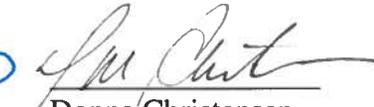

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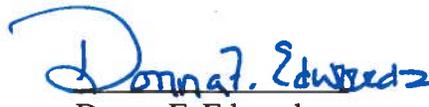

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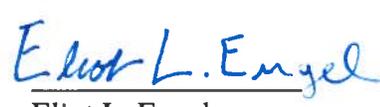

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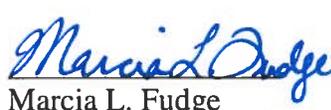

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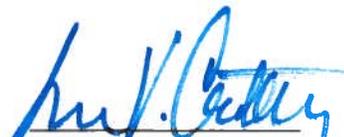

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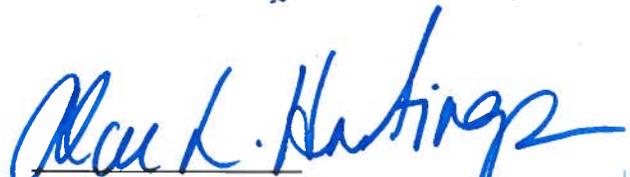

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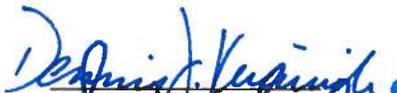

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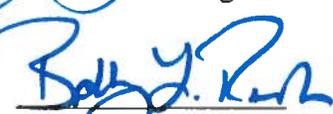

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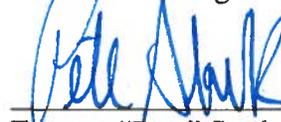

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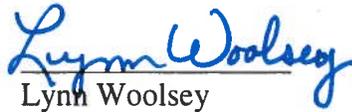
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Cc: U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Susan E. Rice
USAID Administrator, Dr. Raj Shah
Haiti Special Coordinator, Thomas C. Adams