

# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

## Haitian migrants denied their rights

*"If you are black, with identity card or without it, with birth certificate or without, it is the same, it has no value... In the streets, with migration officials, you don't have any rights."*

T. G., a Dominican of Haitian descent

**A**n eight-year-old girl was seized by officials in the streets of the Dominican capital Santo Domingo in the evening of 4 January 2006. She was slapped across the face twice, hard enough to make her mouth bleed. Then she was taken to a detention centre for irregular migrants, without being allowed to contact her parents, and held overnight. She was only saved from being expelled to neighbouring Haiti when a local human rights organization proved she was a Dominican national – because she was black, officials had assumed she was Haitian and in the country without legal permission.

At least half a million Haitians live in the Dominican Republic where they work principally in agriculture and construction. Fleeing the poverty of their homeland, they undertake poorly paid and arduous jobs that most Dominicans are unwilling to do. They face the constant risk of expulsion and systematic discrimination because of their race, skin colour, language and nationality.

Some 20,000 – 30,000 Haitians are expelled every year. Many of these expulsions breach international human rights law. Haitians and Dominico-Haitians are often rounded up and expelled with no chance to appeal, purely on the basis of their skin colour. Many have valid work permits and visas and some are in fact Dominicans, with no family ties in Haiti.

As well as the risk of expulsion, Dominican children of Haitian descent face barriers when they try to obtain a birth certificate from the Civil Registrar Office. Without a birth certificate (the identification document for minors), they are unable to study beyond primary level. They are also unable to claim an identity card when they become 18, barring them from the formal job market and from voting. Parents without documents cannot register their children, leaving many thousands effectively stateless, and perpetuating the cycle of deprivation of rights.



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**Haitian migrant workers arrive for the harvest at a sugar cane plantation in San Pedro de Macoris Province**

### TAKE ACTION NOW:

Please write to the Dominican authorities, calling on them to:

- ▶ stop collective expulsions and ensure that the human rights of all migrant workers are respected in any deportation process
- ▶ put an end to discriminatory policies which prevent Dominicans of Haitian descent from obtaining Dominican nationality
- ▶ implement migration policies that protect human rights, including ratifying and implementing the Migrant Workers Convention.

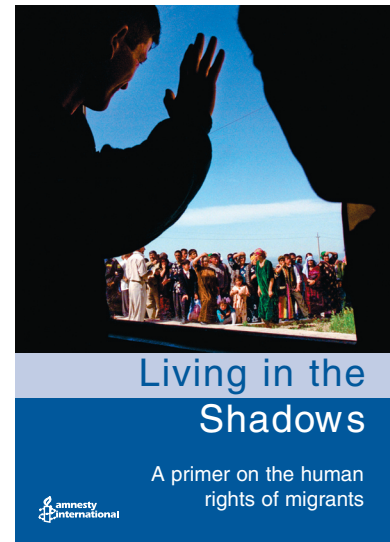
### PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO:

S.E. Leonel Fernández,  
Presidente de la República,  
Palacio Nacional,  
Santo Domingo,  
Dominican Republic  
fax: 00 1 809 682 0827

For further information, see *A life in transit - the plight of Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent* (AI Index: AMR 27/001/2007), available at <http://web.amnesty.org/library>

# LIVING IN THE SHADOWS

## Focus on the human rights of migrants



Every year, thousands of people die while trying to reach other countries – escaping whatever conditions have compelled them to flee their homelands. Many of those who survive the journey to a new country face further abuse and exploitation at the hands of traffickers, unscrupulous employers and state officials. Those who lack official status and the protection of the law – irregular migrants – are often denied the right to education, health and housing and are condemned to live and work in appalling and degrading conditions.

Migrants' rights are human rights, and governments, communities, employers and individuals should do more to uphold and protect them. To this end, Amnesty International has published a public advocacy / campaigning book on the human rights of migrants. *Living in the Shadows: A primer on the human rights of migrants* sets out Amnesty International's proposed agenda for campaigning for migrants' rights.

At the heart of Amnesty International's campaigning agenda is a call to treat all migrants, regardless of their status, with full respect for their human rights and human dignity.

Amnesty International calls on campaigners, advocates and other activists to concentrate on eight key priority areas when promoting migrants' rights:

- ▶ focus on those migrants most at risk – irregular migrants, migrant women and migrant children
- ▶ call for ratification and implementation of core human rights and labour rights treaties, in particular the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (the Migrant Workers Convention)
- ▶ demand greater accountability of state and non-state actors at international, regional and national levels
- ▶ call for migration policies that protect human rights
- ▶ call for more research and better data
- ▶ place migrants and their communities at the centre of debates on migration; recognize and ensure their role in formulating and implementing strategies to protect their rights
- ▶ protect human rights defenders working to protect and promote the human rights of migrants
- ▶ increase public awareness of migrants' rights and their positive contributions to society.

More information on the human rights situation in the Dominican Republic can be obtained at [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

For more information on the human rights of migrants visit [www.amnesty.org/refugees](http://www.amnesty.org/refugees)