

1 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Bahamas: Letter to the Prime Minister-- Fair asylum procedure for Haitian asylum seekers needed

In light of the escalating refugee crisis in the Bahamas, Amnesty International wrote a letter to the Prime Minister today to seek assurances that asylum seekers, among whom there are pregnant women and children, have full access to adequate asylum procedures as required by the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocol.

As a state party to the Convention, the Bahamas government is asked to, among other things:

-- not return asylum seekers to Haiti until their individual asylum claims have been fully examined and they have been given an opportunity to appeal;

-- inform arrivals of their rights and give them adequate access to legal advice and interpreters.

Amnesty International acknowledges that this crisis places a heavy burden on the Bahamas but at the same time reminds the government that under the principle of non-refoulement in the Refugee Convention, the Bahamas is obliged to ensure that no person is forcibly returned, directly or indirectly, to a country where "his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion".

The letter to the Prime Minister can be found at:

<http://web.amnesty.org/web/news.nsf/weball/F0313C6D27A8E10D80256B5700618C79>

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