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Bahamas: international human rights groups express concerns following recent governmental announcements

The signatory organizations express concern about recent events in The Bahamas following the Prime Minister's announcement on October 11 that migrants with an alleged irregular status in The Bahamas will have until December 31, 2017 to regularize their status or face aggressive pursuit and deportation. In the wake of these announcements, media reports suggest that immigration authorities began to stop, search, and conduct raids in pursuit of people perceived as migrants with irregular migratory status, the majority of them Haitians or of Haitian descent. These actions could affect children born in The Bahamas who have a constitutional right to apply for Bahamian citizenship at age 18.

The signatory organizations call on the Bahamian authorities to urgently share a written human rights-based migration policy that uses detention only as a measure of last resort; includes details of the processes available to those who wish to regularize their status; screening processes to avoid the expulsion of individuals born in The Bahamas with a right to Bahamian nationality; and processes to assess asylum claims with all procedural safeguards.

We remind the Bahamian authorities that in accordance with international standards, any deportation procedures must ensure individual assessments of each case, provide individuals with deportation orders in writing, and safeguard the right of individuals to challenge their deportation order before an independent court of law.

We recall that in 2015 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) requested that the Bahamian authorities put in place precautionary measures to safeguard the lives and integrity of detainees held at Carmichael Detention Center, including providing better hygienic conditions, medical treatment for detainees, reducing overcrowding, access to legal assistance, and allowing civil society organizations access to Carmichael to monitor conditions. To date, we understand that conditions at Carmichael remain similar to those that formed the basis of the request in 2015 and we urge the Bahamian authorities to fully implement those measures.

Signing organizations:

Amnesty International

Caribbean Institute for Human Rights

Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)

Centre for Migration Observation and Social Development in the Caribbean
(OBMICA)

Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights

Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)