

Do not Force Liberians to Leave the U.S., Urges The Advocates' New Report

Written by

Monday, 22 February 2010 15:18

Minneapolis (February 18, 2010) – The Advocates for Human Rights and Dorsey & Whitney, LLP announce the release of a report urging the United States government to act immediately to ensure Liberians are not deported. The report, *Liberia Is Not Ready 2010: A Report of Country Conditions in Liberia and Reasons the United States Should Extend Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians*, argues that current conditions in Liberia make forced return a dangerous and ill-advised option. Instead, the report recommends that the U.S. government extend Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Liberians, which is set to expire on March 31, 2010.

Deferred Enforced Departure allows certain immigrant populations to remain in the United States. When civil war erupted in Liberia in 1989, thousands fled to the U.S., seeking peace and safety. An estimated 3,600 Liberians currently are enrolled in the Deferred Enforced Departure program, allowing them to remain and work in the United States. Unless they are granted an extension, these Liberians will be uprooted and vulnerable to deportation as of March 31, 2010.

Although the civil war ended in 2003 and Liberians elected a new government in 2005, Liberia's economy, infrastructure, and social services remain devastated. "We need to be concerned about helping solve the problems in Liberia, not adding to Liberia's challenges and putting people's lives and health at risk by sending people back," says Robin Phillips, Executive Director of The Advocates for Human Rights. The majority of the population still lives without clean drinking water, access to health care, or electricity. Life expectancy is 42 years, the infant mortality rate is 20 times that of the United States, and unemployment stands around 85 percent.

The 2010 paper updates an earlier report released by The Advocates and Dorsey & Whitney in February 2009 on Liberia country conditions. The findings in the 2010 report underscore the vital need for the U.S. to extend DED and to enact legislation allowing Liberians to apply for permanent immigration status in the United States.

The full report can be read online at http://www.energyofanation.org/Liberian_Immigration_Legislation_Toolkit.html