

Eric Holder, Caribbean Leaders Discuss Mass Deportations

By: Nick Chiles – March 19, 2013

Since taking office in 2009, President Obama is on track to deport more people since he's been in the White House than all of the deportations in U.S. history prior to 1997.

This explosion in deportations was the subject of a meeting Attorney General Eric Holder held in Haiti with Caribbean leaders, as he admitted that the U.S. needs to do a better job of alerting countries in the region about imminent deportations.

Hundreds of thousands of people from Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico and other nations have been ejected from the U.S. since Congress changed the law in 1996—mandating every non-citizen sentenced to a year or more in prison be booted from the country upon release. Many of them had to return to homelands they barely knew.

At the Caricom (Caribbean Community) gathering, Holder also spoke with the Caribbean leaders about crime problems, such as efforts to curb weapons and drug trafficking.

“With regard to deportees, I think what we need to do is make sure that we give as much notice as we possibly can before people are to be released and deported from the United States,” Holder told reporters. “As we increase the more general capacity, law enforcement capacity, security capacity of the nations of Caricom, they will be in a much better position to deal with these deportees from the United States.”

Holder also met privately with Haiti's President Michel Martelly and then flew to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands to meet with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The subject of immigrants being sent back to the Caribbean is the focus of a new film, “Home Again,” that has been receiving rave reviews. The film, which focuses on the children of Caribbean immigrants being sent back to the Caribbean from Canada not even aware that they are illegal, has been used to mount a campaign to bring attention to the way countries such as Canada, England and the United States treat their immigrants.

“A lot of times deportees end up as murder statistics,” says director Sudz Sutherland, who interviewed dozens of Jamaican nationals ejected from Canada and other countries while preparing the script.

“They find themselves down in Jamaica as they're deported and then they're on the streets and then they're part of the homeless population.”

The film stars Tatyana Ali, best known as for playing Will Smith's rich, spoiled cousin on “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.” She plays a girl raised in Canada since infancy but is sent

to Jamaica after unwittingly transporting contraband for her boyfriend, leaving her two Canadian-born children in foster care in Toronto.

President Obama's deportation policies have been the focus of intense criticism among immigration activists, who point out the lost productivity and staggering costs of the U.S. policies.

According to a recent report from the Cato Institute, "comprehensive immigration reform would raise wages, increase consumption, create jobs, and generate additional tax revenue." Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, who wrote the report, estimates that "comprehensive immigration reform would yield at least \$1.5 trillion in added U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) over 10 years."