

Press Release

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Florida Governor Rick Scott responds to Haitian American Professionals Coalition's request that he cancels his planned trip to the Dominican Republic due on-going human rights violations of Dominicans of Haitian Descent and Haitians.

Miami, Florida- On February 21, 2014, just a few days before his planned trip to the Dominican Republic, Florida Governor, Rick Scott announced that he cancelled his participation in a trade mission. The trip was organized by Enterprise Florida, the state's economic development organization. On January 5, 2014, HAPC sent a letter to Governor Scott and Team Enterprise Florida that read in part "[t]his is the time for our governor and our state to clearly communicate the message that we will not allow the Dominican Republic to continue its persecution of Haitians and those of Haitian descent... At this critical time, our governor should suspend his upcoming trip."

According to Enterprise Florida's website, the mission of the trip was to focus on unique opportunities for companies and economic development partners to identify new clients in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic currently ranks Florida's ninth largest merchandise trading partner, with over \$5.5 billion in exports. The Caribbean nation is the eighth top market for Florida merchandise exports, which amounted to just over \$3 billion in 2012. It is HAPC's position that due to the Dominican Republic's history and ongoing persecution of blacks, dark skinned people, Haitians, and Dominicans of Haitian descent, Florida's government and private sector should not support the Dominican Republic's discriminatory regime and economic development at this time.

On September 26, 2013, the Supreme Court of the Dominican Republic upheld a law that stripes the Dominican citizenship from an estimated 210,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent living in the country the Court held that children of immigrants who entered the country illegally are not considered to be citizens of the Dominican Republic because their parents are considered to be "in transit." This decision will apply to any Dominicans born to parents "in transit" and will be enforced retroactively to 1929. Pursuant to this law, an 84 year-old person born in the Dominican Republic, their children, and their grandchildren are all subject to de-nationalization.

HAPC supports the governor's decision to cancel his trip to the Dominican Republic. HAPC encourages other government officials, the private sector, and private individuals to express their discontent and to cut economic ties with the Dominican Republic until the government stops its blatant disregard for the human rights of its citizens, Dominicans of Haitian descent, and Haitians living within their borders.

The mission of the Haitian American Professionals Coalition (HAPC) is to mobilize and link professionals of diverse occupations in order to effectively address issues relevant to the community and to provide opportunities for growth and development. The current core associations are: Haitian Lawyers Association (HLA) - Haitian American Nurses Association of Florida (HANA) - Association of Haitian Educators of Dade (AHED) - Haitian American Chamber of Commerce of Florida (HACCOF) - Harmony of the Divine Light (HODL) - Community Access Center (CAC) - Caribbean American Visual Cultural Preservation (CAVCP).