

Amnesty International

Public Statement

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The Gulf Coast Region Continues to Struggle Four Years After Hurricane Katrina

On the 4th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which displaced over 200,000 people, Amnesty International is calling on the U.S. Congress to amend the Stafford Act to protect the human rights of people affected by disasters in the United States. The Stafford Act provides the statutory framework for responding to disasters, including pre-disaster mitigation, rescue and evacuation efforts during a disaster and rebuilding after the disaster has passed. With a proper framework in place the government can insure both that the Gulf Coast is rebuilt and that the human rights of people displaced by future disasters are properly protected.

Four years after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, the displacement of many of those affected by the hurricane continues. Thousands of public housing units have been demolished without adequate guarantees that all former residents will be placed in new developments and affordable housing remains scarce. Many displaced individuals face uncertainty as to whether and how they will transition from temporary housing to a more permanent placement. Those people who are trying to rebuild are having difficulty getting funds to do so. In addition, out of the almost \$7.8 billion obligated by FEMA to local governments, over \$3.2 billion have not been distributed. These funds are necessary to complete infrastructure work such as rebuilding police stations, schools, hospitals and libraries. Without adequate housing or the proper infrastructure in place, many of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina have been unable to return home. The right to return or to voluntarily resettle elsewhere after displacement is a basic human right that the government should uphold.

For more information please visit www.amnestyusa.org/katrina-survivors/page.do?id=1041139.

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