



AMERICAN  
IMMIGRATION  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

*VIA EMAIL*

November 10, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

**Re: Immigration Actions Recommended in Response to Hurricane Melissa**

Dear President Trump,

On behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), we write to urge you to use your authority and the capabilities of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State (DOS) to protect nationals of Caribbean nations impacted by the devastation brought by the recent landfall of Hurricane Melissa, which has caused [75 confirmed deaths](#) throughout the Caribbean already. As the national bar association of more than 18,000 immigration lawyers, law professors, and former government attorneys, AILA members are working every day to help their clients access our immigration system, many of whom are currently at risk of deportation.

We offer the below recommendations for affirmative steps your Administration can take to ensure that impacted individuals currently in the United States are not returned to countries currently recovering from the hurricane. In particular, Temporary Protected Status should be designated immediately for Jamaicans already in the United States due to the environmental disaster brought on by Hurricane Melissa. We also urge you to stop the forcible return of Jamaican, Cuban, Haitian, and other Caribbean Island nationals given the extremely dangerous conditions in their home countries.

On October 29, 2025, Hurricane Melissa, a category 5 storm, [made landfall](#) in Jamaica, causing immense and widespread devastation across the country. The storm is the strongest in the history of the country since [recordkeeping began](#) 174 years ago. As of November 2, [32 people](#) have been confirmed dead in Jamaica with that number sure to rise in the coming days and weeks. More than [13,000 Jamaicans](#) have been forced from their homes and are staying in shelters. Some towns near the coast like [Black River](#) have seen over ninety percent of structures completely destroyed. [Seventy two percent](#) of the island is without electricity which [equates](#) to more than

530,000 people. Even at this preliminary stage after the impact of the storm, experts [predict](#) that the recovery efforts will parallel those in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Given this utter devastation in Jamaica, the U.S. State Department currently has a [Level 3: Reconsider Travel Advisory](#). Moreover, the [State Department](#) has asked the U.S. military for disaster relief and the Jamaican government has formally asked the U.S. government for assistance.

Similarly, Haiti and Cuba experienced widespread flooding and displacement from Hurricane Melissa. In [Haiti](#), the death toll from Hurricane Melissa has reached 43 and nearly 12,000 homes were destroyed or damaged. While official death tolls have not been released by the Cuban government, the United Nations [estimates](#) that 2.2 million people have been impacted, with damage to 60,000 homes, 461 health centers and 1,552 homes.

We urge the U.S. government should take these additional steps to facilitate the protection of people impacted by country conditions in Jamaica, Haiti and Cuba:

### **Inter-Government Agency Actions**

- The Secretaries of Homeland Security and State should initially designate and authorize Temporary Protected Status and/or Deferred Enforced Departure to provide temporary relief from removal and work authorization for Jamaican nationals. They should extend TPS for Haitian nationals and provide similar relief to Cuban nationals.
- USCIS should work with DOS to temporarily develop a means to electronically or remotely complete processing and provide travel documents for follow-to-join I-730 beneficiaries based on approved I-730 petitions to eliminate the need to travel to the embassy in person.

### **Recommendations for the Department of Homeland Security**

- DHS should issue a *Federal Register* notice granting Special Student Relief (SSR) for students from Jamaica, Haiti and Cuba.
- USCIS should expedite the review and processing for Jamaicans, Haitians and Cubans who have pending immigration benefits and visa applications.
- USCIS should exercise discretion to excuse any missed filing deadlines for immigration related applications and petitions.
- ICE should halt deportation flights to these countries and review cases scheduled for removal and consider instead releasing people on orders of supervision. Similarly, ICE should review custody determinations for detained nationals of countries impacted by Hurricane Melissa and consider releasing them on alternatives to detention or bond.

### **Recommendations for the Department of State**

- DOS should expeditiously process the visas of impacted nationals at any U.S. consulate in the world they may safely reach and provide additional tools and resources, such as Creole speakers, to consulates in closer proximity

- DOS should explore diplomatic channels in certain nearby countries to facilitate travel and temporary visa issuance for these individuals for the purpose of third-country national visa processing.

We appreciate your urgent consideration of these recommendations and are available to discuss them with your staff. If you have any questions, please contact Shev Dalal-Dheini at [Sdalal-dheini@aila.org](mailto:Sdalal-dheini@aila.org) or Greg Chen at [Gchen@aila.org](mailto:Gchen@aila.org).

Sincerely,

Jeff Joseph

President, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

CC: Secretary of State Rubio  
DHS Secretary Noem  
USCIS Director Edlow