



Office of  
the Prime Minister

## **Resolution on a Select Committee on Immigration**

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**HON. PHILIP DAVIS QC, MP PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER OF FINANCE  
COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

**February 20, 2023**

Madam Speaker,

As I believe everyone in this House is aware, the security situation in Haiti continues to deteriorate, and as misery and fear rise there, the effects are felt here, with more and more Haitians fleeing the instability.

From the opening days of our administration, we have worked to build a comprehensive national strategy to manage this crisis, taking a number of diplomatic, legal and law enforcement steps that together have built a strong foundation for action and change, as I

described yesterday in an address to the nation.

On the diplomatic front, we have strengthened relationships with regional partners and international friends, because the problem of illegal migration is one that, by definition, crosses borders, and so we must be prepared to work across borders for solutions.

As Chair of CARICOM, it was my distinct honour to preside over last week's meetings, at which we worked together to lay the groundwork for Haitian-led solutions to strengthen their National Police and pave the way for safe and

free elections. I have been in extensive contact with Prime Minister Trudeau of Canada, and we are gratified that Canada will be amplifying their efforts, including with a naval presence off of Haiti's coast.

As we take steps at home to strengthen our capacity to protect our borders, we are strengthening our partnerships with neighbouring countries like the US, Cuba, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and Haiti for enhanced cooperation and intelligence sharing. We will also increase border protection

operations with key partners like the US Coast Guard.

I have been very clear, in our extensive dealings with the United States, the United Nations, and others, however, that The Bahamas is in no position to bear any additional burdens. We are a compassionate people, but we have a great many very serious challenges, and limited resources with which to address those challenges. (By the way, I never miss an opportunity to remind our international friends that a very significant portion of our nation's debt comes from the Category 4 and

5 hurricanes of the last decade – hurricanes that arrive with greater frequency and more intensity because of the carbon emissions of other countries).

On the legal and law enforcement front – we have worked aggressively and systematically to take the surveillance and other steps necessary to successfully appeal a Supreme Court injunction that stood in the way of action on the shantytowns.

Now we are in a position to see real change, finally, on this issue.

The police, defence, and immigration officers are working together now, on Operation Secure, to make sure the laws of our land are enforced.

We appreciate the Opposition's interest in these issues.

If you oppose Operation Secure or any of our efforts to uphold and defend our laws, we believe you have many opportunities to say so.

If you have good ideas and solutions to propose, to add to our efforts, those of course are most welcome, and will be given all due

consideration; there is nothing to stop you from PROPOSING along with all the OPPOSING you like to do.

We urge you to stick to the facts at all times.

For example, this fact: over the course of one year, we have repatriated more individuals than in any other year in our country's history.

And in 2023 alone, 1,024 persons have already been repatriated – meaning we're on track to break the record we set last year.

Only one sloop has landed on an inhabited island in The Bahamas since September 2021.



That is undeniable progress, Madam Speaker. The records make it clear that we have taken appropriate action. And while we secure our borders, we are also addressing the shantytown issue and repatriating the undocumented migrants already here in record numbers.

This is the data, and these are the facts, and no amount of theatrical rhetoric and grandstanding can change them.

Madam Speaker,

We are a nation of laws and will continue to enforce those laws responsibly and humanely.

It was only a week and a half ago, Madam Speaker, that the Supreme Court lifted their injunction.

Immediately following, we launched Operation Secure, a joint security operation between the Royal Bahamas Police Force, The Defence Force, and the Department of Immigration, to address security and migration-related issues in unregulated and unlawful communities.

The operation is focused on identifying irregular migrants, documented migrants, and Bahamians living in these communities and addressing their status in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

Madam Speaker,

Our priority is decisive action based on the laws of our land. Undocumented migrants will continue to be processed and repatriated. Documented migrants living in unregulated communities must relocate at their employer's expense or face repatriation. Any Bahamian

citizens found to be living in these communities will be required to relocate.

Any landowner or business that is flouting our immigration laws will be held accountable.

Madam Speaker,

We will be working closely with the business community to ensure that everyone is aware of their legal obligations and that they are held accountable for any illegal activities. There will be no excuses. Any business breaking our laws will face the consequences, including

prosecution and potentially losing their business license.

Madam Speaker,

As a nation, we must come together to find sustainable solutions.

Our government is committed to taking action, and we will not be slowed down by those who seek to politicise this issue.

Our priority is the safety and well-being of our citizens.

I also want to take a moment to say that everything we do, we do to protect our citizens

and our country. But we do not act with malice or hate.

To the contrary:

As a Christian nation, we must always enforce our laws as humanely as possible, in the recognition that all of God's children deserve dignity.

Madam Speaker,

We are taking decisive and comprehensive action to address the issue of irregular migrants and shantytowns. The Bahamian

people will see for themselves that we are working to protect our communities and our country.

Everyone who is prepared to stand together to protect the sovereignty and security of our great nation is invited to do so. Let us have a minimum of theatrics, and a maximum of cooperation.

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