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On policies of hospitality and hostility in Argentina

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Following the Haiti earthquake of 2010 the countries of the Union of South American Nations¹ undertook to receive Haitians in their countries. The motivation to migrate was linked to the hope of improving their lives in a context where all possibilities and opportunities had been destroyed by the earthquake. According to interviewees with Haitians in Buenos Aires: “After the earthquake there was nothing left...”.

For Argentina to make a commitment to receive Haitians for ‘humanitarian reasons’, no specific regulations or clause were needed, as provision was already made for such an eventuality in Migrations Law 25.871 (unlike in other countries such as Brazil or Chile).² With the open-ended commitment in law there was no time limit involved, yet from November 2012 Haitians started having difficulties in obtaining this protection status and by 2013 it was almost impossible for them to claim rights under this heading. Similar situations are occurring in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, which are also tightening their migration policies toward this population.

For this particular population group, it is unlikely that Argentina would have been a destination of migration were it not for the ease of entry and the free access to university study. However, Haitians

in Argentina face problems in work, housing, documentation, education, culture and discrimination, despite the law’s commitment to the objective of promoting the insertion and integration into Argentine society of persons admitted as regular migrants³ and its call on all offices of the state to favour initiatives tending toward the integration of foreigners in their community of residence.

In principle, for both state and society, ‘allowing entry’ to migrants to your country implies taking responsibility for these persons, for their food, housing and psychological wellbeing. The question that then arises is how, having been through traumatic experiences, they can be taken in, included and integrated into the host society with policies of hospitality and not of hostility to ‘the other’.

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1. www.unasursg.org/
2. www.csa-csi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6933&Itemid=258&lang=es
3. Migrations Law 25.871, Article 3 points e) and h)