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SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF DEPORTED DOMINICANS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Every year, hundreds of Dominicans are arrested abroad for various crimes and sent as deportees to the Dominican Republic by the immigration authorities of those nations. In the first seven months of 2020, a total of 1,100 Dominican ex-convicts were deported from the United States. (Diógenes Tejada, 2020).¹ They served sentences for drug trafficking, murders, falsification of documents, fraud against the government, kidnapping, rape, gangs, driving while intoxicated, robbery, assault and several cases of intentionally setting home fires. As of 2021, 1,428 ex-convicts were deported from different countries, the majority from the United States. The two major grounds for deportation were illegal migration (671) and drugs (463). For gender, in the same year, 117 (8%) were females and 1,311 (92%) males (Reafael Castro, 2021).²

Upon arrival at Las Americas International Airport, the deportees are received by employees of the General Directorate of Migration and the Specialized Corps on Airport and Civil Aviation Security (CESAC), as well as by members of the airport security system and employees of the Ministry of Interior and Police. From the terminal they are transported by buses owned by the Directorate General of Migration (DGM) to their reception centre in Haina which has operated as a reception place for these cases since 2015.

From the Ministry of Interior and Police, once these deportees enter the country, they have access to the registry and enter the identifications in a database. At the moment, the database is only managed for registration and knowledge purposes, but the Ministry is interested in creating public policies that support the deportees towards a healthy social reintegration.

II. JUSTIFICATION

This work aims to study the issue of deportation from the moment of commission of the offence that causes it, to the reintegration of the individual as an entity that, far from being a social and economic burden for the state, is incorporated in a productive way to the Dominican society. It is to be understood that a returnee who is not guaranteed respect for their human rights may represent a threat to the national security system, and their exclusion is likely to increase delinquency and criminality in society. Likewise, we will take into account the level of incidence in the issues of the assistance system and social protection, discrimination as a mechanism of exclusion and citizen security.

III. DEPORTEES IN THE COUNTRY

To confront crime, society proposes the construction of more prisons and the deepening of the severity of punitive models. These plans are accompanied by the “zero tolerance” paradigm, which has a direct impact on the criminalization of deportees and poverty. In the case of men, the lack of employment usually brings with it the deterioration of their strength due to the breakdown of the image as provider and

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¹ Diógenes Tejada. (July 2020). One thousand one hundred Dominicans repatriated from the United States so far in 2020. *El Nacional*, p. 5.

² Rafael Castro (November 2021). Migration reports almost 1,500 deported Dominicans in 2021. *Listin Diario*, p. 8.

protector of their family. The more exclusion from the workplace, the less human development and, consequently, an increase in crime.

The Dominican Republic is one of the countries that has been disproportionately affected by the US Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act enacted in 1996 (EFEUSA, 2016).³ That law has had an impact beyond its original intention to combat irregular immigration. The expansion of the list of crimes or offences that now lead to the deportation of legal residents has resulted in mass deportations.

For deportees, returning to their country of origin represents a challenge. Forced return to their home country often feels like unjust displacement, particularly for those who have lived most of their lives in the United States. When a deportee arrives in the country, they are sometimes rejected due to the belief that they are associated with criminal acts. Before 2013, the registration and transfer system was counterproductive and prevented the reintegration of deportees. Either through direct access to the list of deported persons, or through a non-criminal record certificate reflecting that the person had committed a crime in the United States, employers, banks, and credit institutions openly discriminated against deportees once their status was disclosed to them.

Similarly, the old requirement of periodic weekly reporting for the first six months after arrival in the country revictimized deportees who had committed no crime in Dominican territory. Despite this, there are countless stories of deportees who, when returning to the Dominican Republic, do not find job offers after searching for several months because employers somehow verify the deported status of the individual.

IV. REINSERTION PLAN

The Ministry of Interior and Police, attentive to the situation of national deportees, seeks to design an accompaniment and reintegration programme to achieve the integration of deported Dominicans in a useful and productive way to the family, work and society. The intention is to carry out a survey of information through interviews with Dominicans with international migration experience and with a history of deportation, with the aim of making a quantitative analysis of the issue of deportees in the Dominican Republic, and based on the analysis, developing a qualitative reasoning that allows the development of public policies related to education, employment, housing, security, among others. In the same way, it is intended to define and build a social image of the returnee, which allows society in general to change the perception of this population group, which although it is a minority category, has a special impact on the psychosociological aspect of the Dominicans, especially on the topic related to the increase in crime and its possible link in the implementation of new forms of violence and criminality. Destigmatizing and channelling this population segment in its proper dimension is of great value for the country, since it will constitute a contribution to the strengthening of the national security system and would validate all the efforts of the State to reduce the levels of crime in the country. At the same time, it would integrate a high number of Dominicans to the productive life of the country.

V. EXPECTED RESULTS

From the Ministry of the Interior and Police, we seek to achieve:

- Diagnosis of the current situation of the deportee and the procedure to which he or she is subjected from detention to deportation.
- Raising of the current legislation on the matter and its impact on the process.
- Identification of weaknesses and proposals for their strengthening.
- Creation of adequate instruments that allow the Dominican State to capture the information necessary for the development of national insertion policies for deportees.
- Planning, execution and monitoring of a pilot programme for the rehabilitation of deportees in order

³ EFEUSA (2016). Illegal Immigration Reform Act remains without success two decades later. EFE Agency, 5.

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- to reduce the level of leisure, during the process of reintegration into working life.
- Follow-up programme with the accompaniment of relatives to receive and reintegrate the family to the returnee, a person who is not the same person who left their home one day.
- Proposals for governmental and non-governmental inter-institutional agreements to create articulation mechanisms that guarantee the development, sustainability and sustainability of the Program.
- Definition of the link between the deportee and the increase in violence and crime.
- Impact on the issue of citizen security.
- Decrease in discrimination to which they are subjected due to the weakness of the system and the social perception of its incidence in the increase in delinquency and criminality.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the end, understanding the growth experienced by the phenomenon of deportation in the country and the need and relevance, not only of its study, but also of its inclusion in the national agenda, is important for the design and implementation of specific policies to achieve the reintegration of these nationals.

It is necessary to design policies and programmes that guarantee prevention, care and support mechanisms for returnees, so that upon their return to the country they find the opportunity to adequately insert themselves into society, at least by creating the opportunity to re-educate themselves in order to obtain a worthy job, health, housing and contribute to the reduction of recidivism.