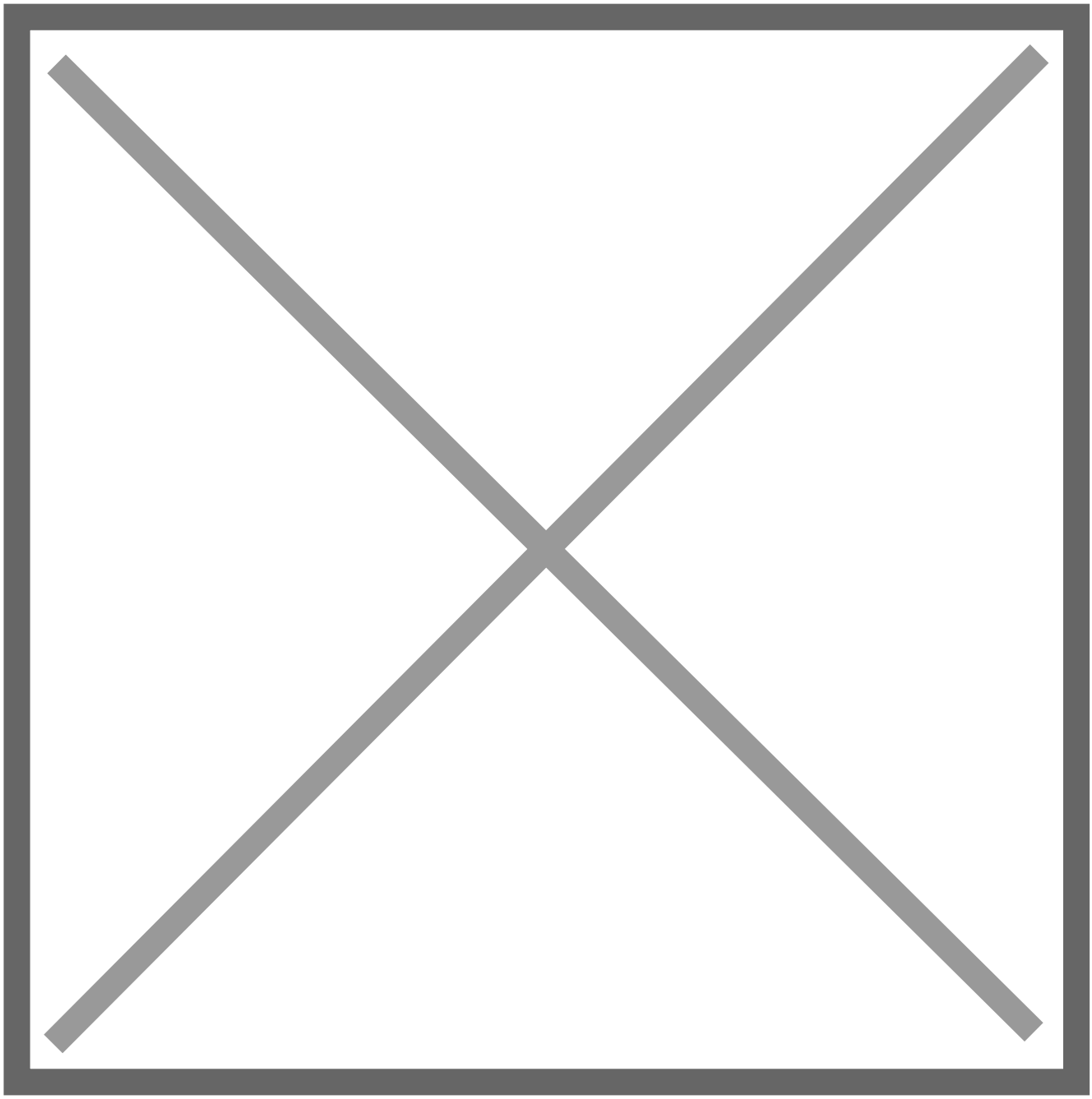
News
Analysis



Worshippers attend a Creole-language Mass marking Haitian Independence Day at St. Jerome Church in the Little Haiti neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., Jan. 1, 2026. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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A Haitian Catholic chaplain serving in the U.S. said he and fellow Haitian Catholics are welcoming a last-minute reprieve from threats of deportation — but its members are still weighing options as the Trump administration cracks down on immigration, while Haiti continues to spiral into chaos.

"We received this good news while in prayer," Fr. Eugène Almonor, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest serving at St. William Parish in Philadelphia, told OSV News.

He had just finished celebrating a Feb. 2 evening Mass when a parishioner received word a federal judge had blocked the Trump administration's move to halt Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for hundreds of thousands of Haitian immigrants currently in the U.S.

The protection was set to expire just before midnight Feb. 2.

TPS is granted to those from Homeland Security-designated countries experiencing ongoing crises, including ongoing armed conflict, environmental disasters, epidemics, or other extraordinary and temporary conditions. Under TPS, an individual is protected from immigration detention and deportation, and can obtain employment and travel authorization.

But Judge Ana C. Reyes of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia granted a stay of the TPS expiration for Haitian nationals — declaring it "null, void and of no

legal effect" — pending judicial review.

As the clock wound down on the protection, Haitian communities throughout the U.S. had braced themselves for possible sweeping immigration enforcement actions — particularly in Springfield, Ohio.

That city's Haitian community had been the subject of several false claims made in 2024 by then-Sen. JD Vance as President Donald Trump's running mate for reelection. Vance spread baseless rumors that Haitian migrants had eaten pets while spreading disease and driving up crime, claims Trump repeated on the campaign trail.

Almonor — a native of Haiti who is now a naturalized U.S. citizen — told OSV News that "many people" had been "staying away from church" due to Immigration and Customs Enforcement roundups, such as those taking place in Minneapolis, under the Trump administration.

"People were afraid to leave their homes," he said, adding that such isolation from religious activities in particular was uncharacteristic, since "Haitian people are spiritual people who enjoy coming to church, who enjoy worshipping God, who enjoy praising the Lord."

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In a searing 83-page opinion, Reyes said the plaintiffs in the case against the Trump administration — a group of five Haitian nationals with TPS protection — asserted that Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had "preordained her termination decision and did so because of hostility to nonwhite immigrants."

"This seems substantially likely," wrote Reyes.

She cited Noem's Dec. 1, 2025, X post recommending "a full travel ban on every damn country that's been flooding our nation with killers, leeches, and entitlement junkies."

Reyes noted that the five plaintiffs in the case were all accomplished professionals — among them a neurologist and a software engineer — and said while "Kristi Noem has a First Amendment right to call immigrants" such names, "Secretary Noem … is

constrained by both our Constitution" and the Administrative Procedure Act "to apply faithfully the facts to the law in implementing the TPS program."

"The record to-date shows she has yet to do that," wrote Reyes.

The opinion also criticized Noem's failure to consult "with appropriate agencies" before ending Haiti's TPS designation, according to a congressional requirement. Reyes added Noem had ignored "that Haitian TPS holders already live here, and legally so" while contributing "billions" to the nation's economy.

The Trump administration has steadily worked to eliminate TPS designations for a number of nations experiencing dire humanitarian crises and armed conflict — including Haiti as well as Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and Venezuela — even as the U.S. has issued its highest-level warnings against travel to such countries.

Ongoing legal challenges to DHS terminations have bought TPS beneficiaries some time; Haiti's long-running TPS status was previously threatened with termination in July 2025.

Haiti has been plagued by multiple, sustained crises such as political instability, natural disasters, foreign intervention and international debt.

In an exclusive April 2, 2025, statement to Aid to the Church in Need, Archbishop Max Leroy Mésidor of Port-au-Prince said the nation's entrenched violence — which has seen armed gangs battle for control of the country amid a failed government — is constraining the Church's ability to serve.

Fr. Thomas Hagan, an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales who has served some three decades in Haiti's capital, told OSV News by phone Feb. 2 that swathes of the city are now uninhabitable due to the armed gangs.

"There are large sections that are just empty, destroyed buildings," he said. "It almost looks like Berlin after the Second World War."

Hagan — who founded and leads the nonprofit Hands Together to provide educational, pastoral and humanitarian development to Haiti’s largest and poorest slum, Cité Soleil — added that food supplies from several charitable organizations have dried up.

If Haitians under TPS protection were forced to return to the country, he said, "the hardest part" in addition to the violence "would be to just get a livelihood, because there are really not many jobs available."

"If I had a family, I'd be worried about what could happen to them," he said, pointing to routine kidnappings and killings.

Some of his staff members have recently received death threats, he said.

Almonor said his Haitian community members fear the violence in their homeland, "especially in Port-au-Prince."

He noted that some "prefer to cross the border into Canada," since "the Canadian government welcomes them."

Despite his U.S. citizenship, their distress is his, said Almonor.

"I am here to serve the Haitian people, to serve the Church," he said. "I cannot accept that my situation is OK, and my people are living in a bad situation. I suffer with them; if they suffer, automatically, I suffer with them."

He added that the faith of the Haitian Catholic community — especially amid the crisis in Haiti and the ongoing battle in the U.S. over immigration protection — continues to inspire him.

"They help me," said Almonor. "I receive from them."

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.