

Final U.S. Baptist released from Haiti

May 17, 2010

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (ABP) — The last of 10 Americans detained while trying to take 33 children out of Haiti following the Jan. 12 earthquake was released May 17 after a judge found her guilty and sentenced her to time already served in jail.

Laura Silsby, an Idaho businesswoman who led a 10-member mission team from her Southern Baptist church to rescue children left homeless by the earthquake, was jailed Jan. 29 after trying to bring a busload of children into the Dominican Republic without proper paperwork. Silsby originally claimed the children were orphans who lost parents in the earthquake, but it later was revealed that all of the children had at least one living parent who handed them over to the Americans in hope of finding them a better life.

Haiti [released](#) eight of the 10 mission volunteers Feb. 17 and a [ninth](#) team member on March 8. Judge Bernard Saint-Vil dropped charges of kidnapping and criminal association against the 10 but ordered Silsby to stand trial on a reduced charge of arranging illegal travel.

The Associated Press [quoted](#) a Haitian prosecutor as saying Silsby was convicted under a 1980 statute restricting movement out of Haiti signed by then-dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier and sentenced to the three months and eight days she had spent behind bars. The prosecution originally recommended a six-month sentence. Her maximum sentence could have been three years.

Silsby, 40, a member of [Central Valley Baptist Church](#) in Meridian, Idaho, was expected to fly out of Haiti on May 17.

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