

Port-au-Prince, March 4, 2005 -(AHP)- The head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Amb. Juan Gabriel Valdès, affirmed Thursday that the brutality of the police is in the process of hindering the stabilization of Haiti.

Mr. Valdès made these remarks to the Miami Herald four days after Haitian police opened fire on a crowd of peaceful demonstrators, killing at least two of them.

"Such acts will no longer be tolerated", declared Ambassador Valdès, warning that "UN soldiers will intervene and use force if necessary whenever police officers shoot at unarmed civilians".

He indicated that MINUSTAH soldiers had already been witnesses to blind violence on the part of the Haitian police in Bel-Air prior to the demonstration on Monday February 28.

According to Mr. Valdès, such acts must not continue, such acts throw oil onto the fire in the populist districts of Port-au-Prince and threaten to put in doubt the legitimacy of and the prospects for organizing elections scheduled for this year.

The carnage of Monday February 28 raised the problem of police brutalities to an intolerable level, affirmed Juan Gabriel Valdès. The Miami herald noted that he and other UN officials were furious.

"We believe that all we have done in Bel-Air is seriously threatened by this incident, said Amb. Valdès.

Mr. Valdès, UN secretary-General Kofi Annan's representative in Haiti, met Tuesday with interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue and the chief of the Haitian National Police, Léon Charles.

Mr. Charles and Mr. Latortue, two members of the CSPN (Superior Council of the National Police), reportedly promised that such acts would not happen again.

Kofi Annan, in a report published last Wednesday concerning Haiti, denounced the numerous cases of human rights violations in the country.

According to Amb. Valdès, the question of human rights and the brutality of the police are the sources of greatest concern to MINUSTAH.

AHP March 4, 2005 10:40 AM