

**Aristide supporters march to protest police killings in Haiti on International Women's Day**

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press Writer

461 words

8 March 2005

04:55 pm

Associated Press Newswires

English

(c) 2005. The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Mothers clutched photographs of their dead sons as thousands of supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide marched Tuesday to protest alleged police killings on **International Women's Day**.

Chanting "Aristide forever," about 3,000 protesters wound through the streets of Bel Air, a volatile slum a few blocks from the national palace in the capital of Port-au-Prince. Women who claimed police killed their sons dressed in white.

"They dragged him out, beat him and then shot him," said Guy Bosse, 54, sobbing quietly as she clutched a photo of her 19-year-old son taken at the morgue.

She claimed police dragged him out of their home on Jan. 30 and shot him for supporting Aristide.

"We want justice," she said. "When Aristide was here these things didn't happen."

Dozens of U.N. peacekeepers in armored vehicles and on foot stood guard.

Haitian police were not present -- the second protest they avoided since the shooting deaths of two Aristide sympathizers during a march last week to mark the one-year anniversary of his ouster.

Witnesses accused police of opening fire on marchers, but police insist they only used tear gas.

"All we can do is ask God to protect us because we don't have any security," said Selvanie Juste, who claimed police shot her son on Feb. 27 as he walked to the store to buy some food.

Allegations of police abuse have raised tensions between the interim government and the 7,400-member U.N. peacekeeping force.

U.N. envoy Juan Gabriel Valdes told The Miami Herald last week that police abuses were undermining efforts to maintain security in Port-au-Prince's sprawling slums, some of which are Aristide strongholds.

Interim Justice Minister Bernard Gousse dismissed the claim and insisted there was no proof that police were responsible for the killings last week.

Gousse also told The Associated Press that U.N. troops violated their mandate by telling police to stay away from a protest in Bel Air on Friday. The U.N. mission said police had agreed to restrict their presence.

Police and government officials did not immediately return calls seeking comment Tuesday, and it was unclear why police were not at the women's day march.

The dispute could cause a rift over security responsibilities and complicate efforts to bring stability to Haiti ahead of promised general elections in October and November.

Much of the countryside is still under the control of former soldiers who led the three-week rebellion that toppled Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004, raising fears that they could sway elections.

(sj-ao)

7

Document APRS000020050308e1380bfz

© 2005 Dow Jones Reuters Business Interactive LLC (trading as Factiva). All rights reserved.