

# U.N. covers for Haiti's killer cops, threaten American journalist

by Haiti Information Project

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Port au Prince (HIP) - Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Haiti's capital May 18 to demand the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and freedom for political prisoners. The U.N. provided security for the march but allowed SWAT units of the Haitian police to enter the otherwise peaceful demonstration with automatic weapons drawn.

HIP reporters on the scene were threatened as they attempted to film the SWAT members wearing black ski masks to hide their identities. These same units of the Haitian police have been responsible for human rights violations in the past that include killing unarmed demonstrators on Feb. 28 and April 27. To date, not a single officer of the Haitian police has received a reprimand or been charged with a crime in these high profile murders. This has led to

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©2005 Haiti Information Project - Brazilian officer who refused to identify himself instructs a Haitian cameraman to photograph journalist Kevin Pina.

charges the U.N. is helping to cover-up the killings and is providing unqualified support to a police force that is seen by many as widely corrupt and out of control.

The role of the U.N., particularly the Brazilians leading the so-called "peacekeeping" mission, was documented today when they threatened HIP Editor and American journalist Kevin Pina with arrest. Pina had been filming members of a Haitian SWAT team despite their objections and verbal threats. Another videographer captured Pina on tape as he challenged the police to explain why they were afraid to be filmed despite the fact they could not be identified under black ski masks. Pina continued by demanding the police explain why U.N. Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdes had assured the press they could operate freely in Haiti two weeks ago during a speech on International World Press Freedom Day. Pina asked, "Was Valdes mouthing pretty words because obviously I am not doing anything illegal by filming you. I am just doing my job of bringing news to the world of your role in Haiti. Why are you afraid to be filmed? Why do you hide behind those frightening masks while you carry those huge guns? How is this camera a threat to you or interfering in your work? Explain that to me because I am the one who should be frightened here. If you decide to shoot me no one will know who you are." A Brazilian soldier intervened and demanded Pina turn off his video camera. The journalist responded, "No. I have every right to keep my



Following the march, the Haitian police attacked demonstrators returning to Cite Soleil. According to witnesses, Sanel Joseph was shot and killed by the Haitian police for no apparent reason as he returned home from the demonstration. No U.N. security personnel or U.N. police monitors were present as the police opened fire.

camera rolling, as long it does not interfere with you or the police. I refuse to stop because I am doing nothing wrong. Otherwise arrest me for the crime of being a journalist." The Brazilian soldier was caught on camera screaming back, "Fuck you! Fuck you!" Pina then asked, "Is that the official diplomatic language the U.N. is using with international journalists in Haiti today?"

The march continued up Delmas and crossed over to Lalue. As the march descended towards the National Palace a U.N. jeep was seen stopping Pina's vehicle as a Brazilian officer photographed him. Pina demanded the officer identify himself and he refused. A tape recorder captured the unidentified Brazilian officer as he stated, "You are always making trouble for us. I have taken your picture and I am going to give it to the Haitian police. They will get you."

As the march returned to Bel Air, a panic ensued as SWAT units began to enter the neighborhood from the direction of Haiti's Cathedral. Pina, a second cameraman and several Haitian radio journalists walked down to the Cathedral where about 20 masked SWAT carrying M-14s and M-16s were preparing to enter Bel Air. In an event witnessed by journalist Reed Lindsay, the Haitian police demanded that Pina not videotape them and one commander asked him exactly what his work is in Haiti? Pina showed his press credentials and explained that people in the United States, especially members of the U.S. Congress, want to understand the



A tape recorder captured an unidentified Brazilian officer as he shouted at Kevin Pina, "You are always making trouble for us. I have taken your picture and going to give it to the Haitian police. *They will get you.*"



Protestors in Bel Air display a photo of President Jean Bertrand Aristide and make a gesture of five fingers symbolizing his five-year mandate.

role of the Haitian police. As Pina continued filming, the SWAT unit literally ran from his camera and left the scene. Pina added, "It's as if this camera is the sun and they are vampires. What on earth do they have to hide? If they are not doing anything wrong why should they be afraid of a press camera? How many people have they already killed in cold-blood under the watchful eyes of the U.N. and not a single one of them has ever been prosecuted for a crime? Look how despite this, the U.N. is still willing to protect them from my camera and allow them into these demonstrations. If there was no violence today it had less to do with the security of the U.N. and more to do with the courage of the press." Journalist Reed Lindsay commented, "What was striking was that there was no UN presence monitoring these guys when they entered Bel Air. I was struck by number of SWAT who seemed like they were moving into Bel Air and towards the peaceful demonstration. I can't say for sure what they were doing there but I can't imagine they had any other objective then to fire at the demonstration. Without the presence of Pina and other journalists on the scene who knows what would have happened."

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At about 8 p.m., SWAT units entered the Petion-Ville market place and began shooting




May 18 demonstration continues despite the U.N. allowing masked members of the Haitian SWAT to enter the area with automatic weapons. The Haitian police murdered unarmed marchers on Feb. 28 and April 27 during similar peaceful demonstrations.



The U.N. allowed Haitian Swat units to line the demonstration route with automatic weapons. It was SWAT units such as this that were responsible for killing unarmed demonstrators on Feb. 28 and April 27. To date not a single officer of the Haitian police has received a reprimand or been charged with a crime in these high profile murders.

indiscriminately and were seen dragging a taxi driver out of his car and placing a gun to his head. A nearby restaurant owner lamented, "They don't need a reason. They don't want respect from the people. They want fear. They think that if they don't shoot somebody then people won't continue being afraid of them. They value fear more than respect."

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