
The wave of violence sweeping across Haiti is rooted in economic despair, the lack of professionalism of the police and the circulation of weapons in the poor districts, according to the Inter-American Dialogue"

Port-au-Prince, June 13, 2005, (AHP)- Dan Erickson, Director of Caribbean projects for the Inter-American Dialogue, declared Saturday that the latest wave of violence gripping sweeping across Haiti is the consequence of economic desperation, inadequate policing, and the prevalence of small arms throughout the country.

According to Dan Erickson, the near total breakdown of the judicial system has left many criminals on the streets and contributed to the impression that there are no legal consequences for violent behavior.

The Haitian interim government has declined to pursue many of the gang members and former military leaders the members of the armed gangs or the former Haitian military personnel who killed dozens of police officers during the rebellion against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, thereby setting the overall tone for impunity, he charged.

Several dozen police officers were killed at that time and their bodies were dragged through the streets as a number of State offices were looted and set on fire by armed bands without the slightest condemnation by the political opposition.

Dan Erickson indicated that the decision by the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince to evacuate some of its staff demonstrates that the U.S. government lacks confidence in MINUSTAH, whose military component is commanded by Brazil.

For his part, a political analyst on Latin America at the Heritage Foundation, Steve Johnson, stated that it is hard to imagine that the situation in Haiti could improve during the electoral period while public institutions are not functioning.

Security is hypothetical without a larger, better-trained police force that has sufficient numbers of personnel, he added.

The political will is there within the interim government, said Steve Johnson, but the contributions to Haiti by donor countries have been woefully inadequate.

Another Haiti analyst, the Executive Director of the Haiti Democracy project, James Morrell, said that at this time, most of acts of violence being committed are the work of pro-Aristide gangs.

Mr. Morrell, with a reputation for being hostile to the Lavalas party, said that President Aristide is "sending the word from his all too vocal exile in South Africa, that he must be dealt in as a major player or he will drown the elections in violence".

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