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Faking Genocide in Haiti **Canada's Role in the Persecution of Yvon Neptune, Part 1**

by Kevin Skerrett; June 23, 2005

The unpalatable truth is that Haiti just does not matter very much.

- editorial, The Guardian, February 17, 2004, 12 days prior to coup

On to Part 2

The US, Canada, and France-backed coup d'état that overthrew Haiti's elected President on February 29, 2004 put an end to almost ten years of constitutional democratic government in that country. Ostensibly, the removal of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was an expression of the "international community's" desire to "re-establish democracy" in Haiti. But having seen similar rationales used to justify support for an attempted coup in Venezuela in 2002 (as part of a long-term and continuing destabilization program there), observers of US, French, and Canadian intentions in Haiti are well advised to examine what has happened there – both prior to and following the 2004 coup – with an especially critical and skeptical eye.

Such a critical eye now finds a growing number of very credible and well-documented human rights reports revealing that the human rights situation in this desperately poor country has now completely unraveled. The unelected post-coup "Interim Government of Haiti" (IGH), backed by Canada, the US, and France, is now carrying out what many observers have referred to as a low-grade civil war of repression. Hundreds of political killings have been reported, as well as summary police executions, more than 700 political prisoners held without charge in Haitian jails, and court decisions exonerating the convicted paramilitaries and killers who carried out the first visible phase of the coup. All of this has followed Haiti's "coup for human rights".

In the midst of these countless tragedies, one particular human rights case has attracted more attention than any other since the coup – the case of Haiti's most famous political prisoner, the constitutional (now former) Prime Minister Yvon Neptune. Neptune turned himself in to police on June 27, 2004 upon hearing that a warrant had been issued for his arrest accusing him of responsibility for what some opponents had referred to as a "genocide" during the violence in Haiti preceding the February 29 coup.

From that day forward, Neptune's rights have been seriously violated. He was not allowed to see a judge within 48 hours of his detention (as required by the Haitian constitution), and his life has been endangered several times. Now, roughly one year after his arrest and detention, Neptune is on his second hunger strike in protest of his illegal incarceration and the failure of the IGH authorities to provide him with basic protection. He currently languishes near death, recently described by a US Congressional aide as "not a skeleton, but close to it."⁽¹⁾

Neptune's case is particularly important because it reveals so much about the political and organizational dynamics behind the coup process in Haiti, and it directly exposes the key role played by the Canadian government. As such, the following will examine the origins of Prime Minister Neptune's imprisonment, the nature of the allegations against him, and the evidence that

has been provided for these allegations. It is worth noting here that no detailed examination of this case has yet been published, outside of Haiti.(2)

Yvon Neptune and the February 29, 2004 Coup d'État

When President Aristide was removed from Haiti on February 29 2004, Neptune remained Haiti's Prime Minister until March 9, at which point he was replaced by a non-constitutional body – a "Council of Sages" – established with the direct involvement of the US, French, and Canadian governments and the UN. Within days of the coup, accusations of Prime Minister Neptune's responsibility for a major massacre, a "genocide" of 50 people, were published by a human rights organization called the National Coalition for Haitian Rights-Haiti (NCHR-Haiti), a group that enjoys significant financial support from the Canadian and US governments.(3) The particular episode of violence and political killings for which Neptune was being blamed took place in the city of St. Marc on February 11 2004, during the three-week "death squad rebellion" that began February 5 in Gonaives and was then spreading through the north of Haiti. The attacks launched through this "rebellion" culminated in the coup of February 29.

Neptune turned himself in to police after hundreds of other elected officials, activists, and supporters of the Lavalas movement had already been jailed, killed, driven underground, or exiled. In voluntarily turning himself in to the police, Neptune was trusting that the justice system in Haiti under the Canada-backed interim government would treat him promptly and fairly. Asserting his innocence, Neptune asked that evidence of such responsibility be made public, and that he be properly charged and have the accusations assessed by a judge.

In fact, Neptune was not brought before a judge – despite the constitutional requirement of a 48-hour detention limit - until May 25, 2005, some 11 months after being detained. Over that period of time, Neptune's life was threatened several times, including once during the prison "breakout" episode of February 20, 2005 that led to his being temporarily abducted (and his life threatened), then freed, and having to turn himself back in.(4) In hindsight, it is now obvious how wrong Yvon Neptune was to trust Haiti's existing justice system.

NCHR's Allegations Against Yvon Neptune

In the course of the February 2004 political upheaval led in part by former military and paramilitary death squad veterans Jean Tatoune, Louis-Jodel Chamblain, and former police chief Guy Philippe, there was a violent tug of war waged between pro- and anti-government groups in various communities, including the town of St Marc, a small port city located north of Port-au-Prince. Following a serious episode of violence that led to a number of deaths, NCHR issued a report dated February 15 that observed that violent exchanges had taken place in St. Marc on February 8 and 9, claiming that "OP Lavalas and Government officials responded to Monday's events by setting fire to several homes of Opposition supporters."(5) This report cites no witnesses, and refers to no specific evidence or on-site visits by NCHR staff or other observers.

The next reference by NCHR to events in St. Marc was published more than two weeks later in a dramatic March 2 press release which reports the arrest of three individuals associated with a pro-government group called Balé Wouzé.(6) It is in this press release that we first see major accusations leveled directly at the "Lavalas regime", with NCHR alleging the government's responsibility for what they refer to as the "genocide" of February 11:

The loss of that day, while still only partially recorded, includes more than fifty (50) people killed or reported missing and several dozen houses burned. The bodies of those killed have incinerated inside burning homes or have been left to animals.(7)

NCHR then claims to have conducted a detailed, on-site investigation into this "genocide" only two days subsequent (on February 13):

A delegation composed of members of the national and international press, the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organisations (POHDH) and the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) visited the area on 13 February 2004, two (2) days after the massacre, observed and denounced the situation. The crimes committed in Saint-Marc during this period of time are distinguished by their cruel, horrific, savage and barbaric nature, and constitute the worst of the worst committed by the Lavalas regime. The killers had at their disposition powerful resources from the State and now are benefiting from official impunity. NCHR considers these acts as genocide, or better yet, as a crime against humanity.

The genocide committed at [the St. Marc neighbourhood] Scierie was carried out less than forty-eight (48) hours after a visit from Prime Minister Yvon NEPTUNE to Saint-Marc, during which he reiterated his government's desire to re-establish "order" in the city and then [subsequently] gave instructions for a brutal intervention against the forces of the Opposition.(8)

This claim that Neptune gave instructions for a "brutal intervention" is not supported by any evidence, but it forms the first full allegation of Neptune's responsibility for subsequent killings. There were many international journalists on hand at the press conference held in St. Marc that day, and while many reporters mentioned an appeal for calm, and the restoration of order, not a single reporter mentioned anything about "instructions for a brutal intervention". In fact, the Associated Press – not known for sympathetic reporting on President Aristide - did report on the visit by Yvon Neptune to St. Marc on February 9, during which Neptune is said to have "called on Haitians to help restore calm."(9)

This March 2 press release claims that NCHR was accompanied by "national and international press" during their investigation. In fact, there are no reports of this delegation or its results in any of the New York Times, the Miami Herald, the Associated Press, Reuters, or the Agence France-Presse, these five being among the most active international press outlets working in Haiti at the time. Given the gravity of the claims being made by NCHR, it would be very surprising if reporters accompanying such an organization were to find evidence of such a large number of killings and choose not to report it, making this claim difficult to accept.

The initial allegations were then elaborated upon in a March 30 2004 NCHR press release, titled "The Scierie Genocide: NCHR Advocates for the organization of a model trial."(10) In this release, they announce the formation of a victims organization and NCHR's provision of legal support to this group (later shown to be Canadian-funded). After asserting their "complete neutrality", they announce that

The la Scierie genocide constitutes the largest massacre perpetrated against the civilian population by the Lavalas regime. Numerous violent acts have been revealed - acts that were evidently carried out with the complicity of high ranking officials of the State.(11)

This release is followed by another on April 15 which directly challenges the IGH to arrest Neptune:

POHDH and NCHR question the reasoning behind the arrest of Privert only and not former Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, when the evidence against Neptune concerning his participating in orchestrating the La Scierie (St. Marc) Massacre of 11 February 2004 is more substantial.(12)

All of this raises two key questions. First, was the number of people killed in St. Marc on February 11, 2004 great enough to earn the potent and emotionally-loaded label "genocide"? Second, whatever the actual scale of the violence, has any evidence been presented to suggest

the responsibility of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, who was jailed on such accusations? The following will examine these two questions primarily through a review of the news coverage published in the widely-distributed international media.

Question #1 – How Many People Were Killed on February 11, 2004 in St. Marc?

There is no doubt that a violent clash occurred in St. Marc on February 11, and in fact in the days and weeks prior to and subsequent to that date. But was it a “genocide”, a “massacre”, or “better yet, a crime against humanity”? Obviously, the very meaning of these terms remains contested, both in legal definitions and simple common language interpretations. What follows is an attempt to grapple with this question first by simply attempting to examine all available published evidence regarding this case in order to provide a rough estimate of how many people were actually killed in this episode, and the circumstances of their deaths.

Two armed groups had been operating in St. Marc for some time. One of them, known as Balé Wouzé, were supporters of the Lavalas Party and defenders of the elected government. Another group, known as Rassemblement des militants conséquents de Saint-Marc (RAMICOS), were opponents of the government, and of President Aristide in particular. The Agence France-Presse reported on February 11 that the previous evening, battles between Balé Wouzé and RAMICOS had left two dead. “Two victims considered close to the opposition were burned in their house, by presumed partisans of Balai Rouzé (sic) in retaliation for the torching of the health clinic of Doctor Yvetho Mayette.”(13)

Also on February 11, the Associated Press reported that after a raid by police (said to have been accompanied by Balé Wouzé members) on a RAMICOS headquarters in the Scierie neighbourhood of St. Marc the day before, reporters had seen the “charred remains of one person and the bodies of three people apparently shot in the back”(14), though this report does not make it clear who the victims were. It cites a witness who indicated that “pro-Aristide” militants had “set ablaze five houses and fired at fleeing residents.”(15)

Similarly, an Agence France-Presse report filed the evening of February 11 indicates that two government opponents had been killed in this exchange, and in addition to these victims, reporters had seen the bodies of three young men who had been shot, for a total of 5 dead - which is consistent with the report from the Associated Press.(16) The same report indicates that in addition to the RAMICOS stronghold, an opposition radio station and the house of an opposition activist had been burned down by pro-government partisans. The next day, Agence France-Presse filed a report by a different reporter which cited a spokesperson of the PNH (Police Nationale Haitienne, the Haitian National Police), who “confirmed that a police operation had been carried out in the city, but said the fatalities were the result of fighting between the anti- and pro-Aristide groups, the RAMICOS and the Balai Rouzé (sic).”(17)

In the course of the week following February 11, the New York Times’ Lydia Polgreen was in Cap Haitien and St. Marc, and filed several articles. Polgreen’s only direct reference to the killings in St Marc cites “visitors” to the headquarters of RAMICOS, who had been shown “bodies”.(18) While no number of bodies is given, it is very difficult to believe that it could have been any significantly large number – such as NCHR’s claim of 50. Polgreen filed a number of other reports following this, and did not refer again in any detail to St. Marc specifically, nor did the violence in St. Marc stand out in her reporting from the chaos and violence that had erupted throughout the country.

The Haitian newspaper Le Nouvelliste also reported on this episode, indicating that “at least three young people were shot Wednesday [February 11]” and citing the AFP report above that mentions one body in a burned-out building, again without identifying it.(19)

Based on these reports, it is clear that the international media did report on a violent exchange between the Haitian police, militants of Balé Wouzé, and members of RAMICOS. However, in all of the coverage from these key sources (Miami Herald, AFP, AP, NYT), the largest number given of those killed in the incidents of February 11 is five. Most reports also include reference to the torching of a number of buildings, again on both sides. There are no reports of a visit to St. Marc in this period by representatives of NCHR or POHDH, nor any other human rights organizations conducting investigations into the incident. Not a single report in the international media refer to the presence of either organization in the city in the period of time that NCHR claims to have been there accompanied by "national and international press". The NCHR press release does not name any of the journalists or news agencies that supposedly accompanied them, nor are any media reports cited which might corroborate their claims.

Some context for these events is useful. The February 11 police raid on the RAMICOS stronghold followed the eruption of the armed "rebellion" begun in nearby Gonaives on February 5. This Gonaives "rebellion" was launched with at least the appearance of significant coordination and planning, and the "rebels" were soon joined by members of RAMICOS in St. Marc (on February 7), and other armed anti-government groups in other cities, all intent on illegally and violently challenging the constitutional authority of the elected government. In St. Marc, the police station was attacked and burned out, with the few police officers fleeing the city, thereby leaving control of the area temporarily in the hands of the members of RAMICOS. According to reports, these attacks left several dead, apparently including both civilians and members of armed political groups on both sides of the conflict.

By February 9, a group of PNH reinforcements had succeeded in re-taking control of the area – leaving several dead in various gun battles. For those in St. Marc, the level of fear must have been extremely high, given the promise of one rebel leader, Winter Etienne, who was actively threatening to order his "force" in St. Marc (clearly a reference to RAMICOS) to attack:

"We already have a force hiding in St. Marc, and we also have one hiding in Cap-Haitien. They are awaiting the orders to attack," promised Winter Etienne to the Associated Press.(20)

Several days later, Miami Herald reporter Michael Ottey would refer casually to the "calculated plan concocted by armed gangs opposed to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to "cleanse" this impoverished land of his supporters."(21) The plan would be launched following a campaign to terrorize the general population, as Ottey outlines:

Metayer, Tatoune and Etienne embarked on their cleansing scheme by first going after members and sympathizers of Lavalas and torching just about anything they owned. They then went after police and government officials.(22)

Ottey's overview of the recent actions of RAMICOS are also relevant for understanding the broader picture.

RAMICOS, had allegedly carried out its own reign of terror on Jan. 15 by setting fire to two local radio stations and attacking Aristide partisans.(23)

In the context of an open and violent rebellion, and a promise from rebel leaders to send the orders to RAMICOS to attack again, the attempts to end this "reign of terror" are not only unsurprising, it would seem to be a minimum response to be expected from a government with a responsibility to protect the population at large and to defend the rule of law and its own constitutionality. This is especially true given the fact that a significant section of the population is dependent on international food aid for survival, and the "rebellion" that broke out very clearly disrupted the flow of this vital provision. Thousands of lives were immediately threatened by this disruption, as aid agencies urgently pointed out.

With key roads blocked by the antigovernment militants, international relief agencies that daily feed more than half a million of Haiti's poorest are warning of a large-scale humanitarian crisis as fuel and food grow scarce.(24)

Moreover, these same media sources provide much evidence that the violence attributable to the anti-government group RAMICOS and its allies in Gonaives was especially brutal. When the paramilitaries first launched the "rebellion" in Gonaives, several reports of horrifying attacks were recorded, such as the following:

Crowds mutilated the corpses of three police officers, AP reporters said. One body was dragged through the street as a man swung at it with a machete, and a woman cut off the officer's ear. Another policeman was lynched, and residents dropped large rocks on his body.(25)

A similarly grim scene, also in Gonaives, is described in a February 12 report:

Dogs chewed on the charred remains of an alleged Aristide hit-man who rebels killed by "necklacing"- putting a tire doused in gasoline over his head and setting him aflame.(26)

The Associated Press reported on February 14 that in St. Marc, "anti-Aristide militants burned down a clinic...because officials refused to hand over two wounded anti-government militants."(27) In a separate incident, a group of "rebels" shot and wounded a police officer, then "dragged away the wounded officer and stoned him to death, smashing in his head."(28)

Prior to this incident, the Miami Herald reported that on February 11, "anti-Aristide gunmen killed one man and torched several homes."(29) The same source later reported that the rebels had retaken St. Marc by February 15, and that in the process, "the rebels shot, burned and looted their way through cities and villages. Paramilitary and former army exiles returned to the country to join forces with the militants."(30) This latter reference is to the arrival in Gonaives of former death squad leader and convicted killer Louis-Jodel Chamblain publicly arrived from the Dominican Republic to join the "rebels" in Gonaives and St. Marc. They were about to launch a march alongside the former police chief Guy Philippe toward Port-au-Prince in what would eventually prove to be a successful set-up for the coup of February 29 that saw Aristide removed.

Very few of the serious human rights violations committed against members of the PNH or defenders of the elected government are even mentioned in the February/March 2004 press releases from NCHR, despite their claims to have actually been in St. Marc at this time (February 13), investigating what they much later characterize simply as a one-sided "genocide". Scarce mention is made of the killing of the wounded police officer, and completely omitted are the torching of the health clinic, the killing of the one man by "anti-Aristide gunmen", nor the prior torching of two radio stations by RAMICOS – all of which were reported by the "international media" who were purported to have been with NCHR in St. Marc at this time. These are strange omissions for a supposedly non-partisan human rights organization.

In fact, NCHR's March 2 press release was focused exclusively on condemnations of violence purportedly carried out by the Haitian police, and supporters of the Haitian government. It claims to have conducted sufficient investigation to conclude that the "crimes committed in Saint-Marc during this period of time are distinguished by their cruel, horrific, savage and barbaric nature, and constitute the worst of the worst committed by the Lavalas regime."(31) They present no evidence of any links between the violence they describe and any direction from the Haitian government – the "Lavalas régime" – nor have they presented any evidence, or even an investigation report, in the 15-month period since.

Finally, on April 9, 2005, some 13 months after NCHR first issued its dramatic claims of "genocide" in St. Marc, former NCHR Director Anne Fuller, now a consultant for Human Rights

Watch, published a report in the Haitian newspaper Le Nouvelliste on the events of February 11.(32) While obviously not a neutral party in evaluating the recent work of NCHR, her report is interesting nonetheless. Indicating that she had carried out an investigation of several days length at the end of March 2004, Fuller provides some elaboration on the details reported in the several days of media coverage immediately following February 11. She reports having interviewed residents of the neighbourhoods where the violence took place over the course of several days, and concludes somewhat tentatively: "I believe at least 10 people and perhaps 12" were killed in St. Marc that day.

However, Fuller adds that "some but not all were RAMICOS members" – acknowledging that some of the dead were either members of Balé Wouzé or, in fact, other victims of armed RAMICOS partisans or even uninvolved bystanders. In addition, while clearly the circumstances of several killings described by witnesses suggest illegality and even brutality, it is equally true that some number of those killed could have died in gun battles with police who were in the process of attempting to make arrests of armed individuals involved in an (eventually successful) armed insurrection. On this point, it is worth noting that one member of RAMICOS, Thompson Charlienor, gained the (unelected) position of "Deputy Mayor" of St. Marc following the coup, and leads a "victims advocacy" group – likely the group supported financially by Canada (via NCHR). RAMICOS is now described as a "powerful presence" in St. Marc.(33)

Fuller concludes by urging NCHR to issue an investigation report in support of their claims. As indicated above, NCHR still has not filed any such report.

Based on this review of international media coverage and the press releases issued by NCHR, it is clear that no evidence has been presented to support the repeated claims that the killing of some 50 individuals took place on February 11 2004 in St. Marc. Further, no evidence has been presented indicating that those individuals who were killed had been subject to illegitimate exercise of force by Haitian police. Obviously, examining what is reported in the mainstream western media is hardly a replacement for a serious and detailed investigation into this incident. However, given the apparent inclination among most western journalists to report what were often merely allegations of incidents of violence that were attributed to the (pre-coup) Haitian government, the police, and supporters of President Aristide's Lavalas party, it seems extremely unlikely that the kind of major massacre claimed by NCHR was missed or not reported. This leaves only the statements of one organization, one which has failed to provide any supporting evidence or reporting. In fact, when reporters have asked NCHR Director Pierre Espérance about the discrepancy between international media reports and his claim of up to 50 killed in St. Marc, he has replied that the other bodies (which he has not identified) were "eaten by dogs."(34)

It is also revealing that all of the above-cited sources – the international media, NCHR, and Anne Fuller – appear not to have conducted interviews with representatives of the pro-Lavalas group Balé Wouzé. This is interesting because another Haitian human rights organization – the Comité de Défense des Droits du Peuple Haïtiens (CDPH) – has published a detailed 67-page report on this episode, and included among their sources the relevant NCHR press releases, the same media reports, and also a written statement by representatives of Balé Wouzé. The Balé Wouzé statement cited is roughly consistent with the the international media reports in terms of the numbers killed, and adds other details which completely contradict NCHR's version of events:

At roughly 11 o'clock in the morning, [RAMICOS] broke into the health clinic of Dr. Ivetho Mayette in order to abduct the victim [Balé Wouzé member Edrice Thluzmé, shot the day before by members of RAMICOS] who was receiving treatment. They demanded of the doctor that he be turned over, and upon his refusal to do so, they torched the clinic. They were then caught in flagrante delicto by a police patrol; to defend themselves, they opened fire on the police while fleeing in the direction of their base in Scierie. The police followed them. Seeing the police pursuit, RAMICOS members sought refuge in the mountains, shooting into 3 houses they passed on their way. In the exchange of fire with police, 5 individuals were killed according to inhabitants

of the region. At no moment did members of Bale Wouze gain access to Scierie, nor was there any massacre. More than 15 houses were burned down in the area where ex-deputy Amanus Mayette lived.(35)

The statement cited from Balé Wouzé also includes a very disturbing report of vicious reprisals against their group during the 3 days following the February 29 coup that removed President Aristide, listing 19 individuals by name as having been executed (shot) by RAMICOS members.

Among those killed, two were subjected to atrocities before dying. This was the case, for example, with Jeanty Renonce who was dragged behind a Toyota pick-up through the streets of St. Marc before being burned in front of the office of Balé Wouzé on road Neuf, and also Dieulifaite Fleury, who was hung from a mango tree then burned, and then also Mitilien Somoza, who was shot and then mutilated on March 2, 2004.(36)

Obviously, these reports from Balé Wouzé should not be accepted at face value, and these claims – essentially claims of a different massacre altogether – should be investigated and evaluated. However, NCHR does not refer to these reports, let alone any investigation, nor are they involved in organizing and financing “victim’s organizations” related to these killings. In fact, NCHR does not even refer to the CDPH report, even subsequent to its June 2004 publication. In turn, there is apparently no recognition within the international media or NCHR’s funders at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that alternative and much more detailed reports of this episode even exist.

Question #2 - What Evidence Exists of Prime Minister Neptune’s Guilt?

In addition to the sweeping conclusions regarding the responsibility of the “Lavalas régime” for the violence in St. Marc, NCHR pointed out that Prime Minister Neptune had visited the city two days prior to the outbreak of violence.(37) Using particularly extreme language to characterize the outcome, NCHR’s press releases argued that in view of his visit to the city in the days prior to the outbreak of violence, Prime Minister Neptune was clearly “complicit” in the 50 killings claimed (a figure NCHR Director Espérance continues to use, including during radio interviews).(38)

Following the coup, NCHR Director Pierre Espérance repeatedly demanded of the IGH that Prime Minister Neptune be pursued for his “implication” in the “genocide” in St. Marc. When a warrant was issued for the arrest of Yvon Neptune in June 2004, the Haitian government referred specifically to the allegations made by NCHR in their rationale for the arrest.

NCHR’s partisan bias is now especially obvious, given their tendency to either ignore or minimize the responsibility of the post-coup Haitian government for its own abuses, and re-direct blame onto supporters of Lavalas. One example of this shift is their introduction of the concept of “collateral damage” to help explain the continuing violence of the Haitian police. Prior to the coup, NCHR had a consistent practice of directly linking police abuses to the government – particularly on those occasions when civilians were said to have been “targeted”. Post-coup, NCHR now refers to killings of civilians by Haitian police as “collateral damage”, a phrase clearly aimed at providing a legitimizing cover for police attacks as mere unintended “accidents”. Worse still, this concept has been used in a way that specifically attempts to re-assign the blame for a horrifying series of police attacks, including the summary execution of 13 individuals in Fort National on October 26, 2004, on supporters of Lavalas and President Aristide.(39) A search of NCHR’s website shows not a single instance of the term “collateral damage” prior to the February 29 coup.

As awareness of Yvon Neptune’s situation has grown, particularly since the launch of his second hunger strike on April 17, various international agencies have begun to condemn his mistreatment. Even the UN has now recognized that NCHR has distorted this story. Following

an investigation into the violence in St. Marc carried out in April 2005, UN Human Rights Expert on Haiti Louis Joinet has "dismissed accounts of a massacre"(40) and describes instead a series of killings in "confrontations" between two armed groups (Balé Wouzé and RAMICOS), with casualties on both sides. Joinet's conclusions are echoed by Thierry Fagart, the chief the UN Mission's Human Rights division, who went even further, declaring that

...since the beginning of the procedure until today, the fundamental rights, according to national and international standards, have not been respected in the case of Mr. Neptune and Privert.(41)

In other words, the UN's two top officials dealing with human rights in Haiti have now completely repudiated NCHR's most significant and reported claim of the past two years. And the repudiations do not end with the UN. NCHR-Haiti's defense of Neptune's treatment is viewed as so reprehensible that the parent organization that gave birth to it (NCHR-New York) actually took the dramatic step of issuing a press release in early March 2005 in order to distance itself from its renegade offspring.(42) Pointing out that NCHR-Haiti Director Espérance had issued a statement "critical of the decision by UN and Haitian authorities in Haiti to provide emergency medical treatment to former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune," the New York-based NCHR Executive Director stated:

Neither Mr. Espérance, nor any member of the staff of NCHR-Haiti, speak for or on behalf of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR), its board or its staff.(43)

For many observers, this statement, along with those of Joinet and Fagart, have left NCHR-Haiti completely discredited. Their recent attempt to evade this destroyed reputation by changing their name only contributes to the image of a desperate, failed organization. The organization's failure to present any evidence implicating Yvon Neptune in any illegal killings in St. Marc only further confirms this image. Moreover, in the process of attempting to establish a case using only allegation and innuendo, they appear to have grotesquely exaggerated one particular incident of violence with a distinctly partisan and political objective – the persecution of one of the Lavalas Party's most prominent figures. These conclusions raise a different question, that of the ultimate origins of the real motivations and agenda of NCHR, a subject to which we now turn.

On to Part 2

Tab 91

Chaos engulfs Episcopal bishop in Haiti

24.06.2005

'The situation is very bad. ... I don't see how I can encourage people to come here'

by Alexa Smith

LOUISVILLE -- Slightly more than one year after the ouster of Haiti's president, the only constants on the island are poverty and mayhem.

A Brazilian-led team of 6,000 United Nations peacekeepers is unable to disarm mobs bent on widespread murder, rape, robbery and carjacking -- mobs that now are kidnapping middle- and working-class Haitians and foreign nationals and holding them for ransom.

Government authorities say six to 12 kidnappings occur each day, with ransom demands ranging from \$30 to \$200,000, according to The New York Times.

Human-rights groups say 700 people have been killed in the past eight months -- among them seven peacekeepers.

"The situation is very bad now," says Bishop Jean Zache Duracin, bishop of the Episcopal Church in Haiti (ECH), the largest diocese in the U.S. Episcopal Church. The ECH is the mission partner of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on this small Caribbean island about 90 minutes southeast of Miami by air.

"It is worse now because of the insecurities," Duracin says. "There are so many cases of kidnapping. We didn't have that before. Now it is added to what we've experienced ... in the past. Things are getting worse day by day."

Duracin has sent the U.S. missionaries there home, and has told the PC(USA) that Presbyterians planning mission trips to Haiti ought to postpone them.

To date, one Episcopal missionary remains on the island. Duracin said he expects that person to leave by month's end. A mission connection conference for U.S. Episcopalians in May was moved for security reasons from Haiti to Miami Beach.

Haiti's chaotic capital, Port-au-Prince, is overrun with hoodlums: Powerful drug traffickers, corrupt former military officers and small-time hooligans who are targeting middle-and-working-class Haitians for kidnapping but sweeping up poor folks, too.

Political gangs in the slums of Port-au-Prince are notoriously vicious, further destabilizing the fragile interim government.

Some of the violence is related to attempts to disrupt Haitian elections scheduled for this fall. Marauding vigilante groups storm through some neighborhoods, hunting down supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Aristide's toughs have their own gangs in slums such as Cite Soleil and Bel-Air, areas too dangerous for Haiti's poorly trained police to enter.

"When people ask about coming here, I explain the situation," Duracin says by cell phone from the capital. "Even for us who live here, it is terrible. Before we go out, we listen to the news ... (to)

see what the situation is like outside. In some areas of Port-au-Prince, people can't pass, because gangs control the areas. I don't see how I can encourage people to come here."

Those who do journey to Haiti are taking their lives into their hands, the bishop says, emphasizing that outsiders -- presumed to be attached to deeper pockets -- are potential prey.

The New York Times reported this week that shots had been fired at a U.S. Embassy van and that the U.S. State Department had ordered non-essential personnel home. A Canadian development representative was kidnapped in May and released 16 hours later. His abductors used cheap pistols held together with duct tape and had pictures of Aristide taped to their rifles. A French diplomat was killed on the road between Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien. An Indian businessman was kidnapped, as was a Russian contractor to the United Nations.

"There's confusion now in the country, among so many armed gangs with weapons," Duracin says. "There's so much confusion that we don't know which group (is doing what) ... and they're kidnapping people from all levels of society."

Duracin, a linguist who has tried to improve Haiti's education system, has been bishop for 12 years. He was consecrated at Holy Trinity Cathedral in downtown Port-au-Prince, less than a mile from the National Palace, the official residence of Haiti's presidents.

Gunshots were heard outside the cathedral last Sunday while more than 300 Episcopalians were inside for worship. A convent next-door -- home to a small order of nuns -- has been abandoned as unsafe.

Social and political unrest has plagued Duracin's ministry, but he says he has never seen anything like the current chaos.

"Now, now it is worse," he says. "It is the worst, now. If it gets worse than this, Haiti will disappear," he says.

The Haitian church has spoken with a strong ecumenical voice, but it is quieter now. It has had little to say since Aristide's departure, aside from calling for peace and urging the government to restore order.

"We spoke so much about the situation ... but people didn't hear," Duracin says, speaking of politicians in particular.

He still has his pulpit.

Earlier this week, Duracin visited Gonaive, an assortment of shantytowns and pothole-filled roads that is one of Haiti's largest cities. To make already miserable matters worse, Gonaive was hard-hit by Hurricane Jeanne last September. "I preached and I said to people: The United Nations can help us. But if we don't organize ourselves, they can't help us. It was an occasion to preach about love. Love is important."

He says he told his listeners that the trinity -- God in three persons -- personifies hope.

"That means for us, even though we are different from one another, we can be one in Jesus Christ and one in the society," he says.

Aristide, a former Catholic priest, was swept into office by a popular movement that deposed 'Baby Doc' Duvalier, who had inherited the resident-dictator's job from his father, known as 'Papa Doc.' The Duvalier clan is one of a series of U.S.-backed repressive regimes in Haiti. Hoped-for reforms under Aristide included raising the minimum wage, redistributing wealth and reducing the army's power by creating a national civilian police force. He achieved only the latter.

His first seven-month administration was overthrown in a military coup, with the help of individuals later alleged to have been on the payroll of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

In 1994, when he was restored to power by the Clinton administration, Aristide banned the Haitian army, but abandoned economic reform and involved Haiti in a controversial World Bank-International Monetary Fund program - which some journalists have said were the price for Aristide's return. His second term was clouded by scandal, corruption and persecution of his opponents and of former friends who criticized his methods.

In February 2004, Aristide was removed from Haiti by U.S. and French forces, in what Aristide called a "modern-day kidnapping."

Duracin isn't sure what the solution is for Haiti, but he wants U.S. churches to urge their government to help. The executive council of the U.S. Episcopal church passed a resolution on June 16 urging the government to "facilitate and support a negotiated peace among the various rival factions" in Haiti.

"I think the U.S. government has traditionally played a big role in the politics of Haiti," Duracin says. "... We need peace. Peace to go to work, to live. We exist now in Haiti. But there is no life."

He finds inspiration in his pastoral visits, although he diligently checks the news before taking to the island's roads, many of which are now unsafe.

"My pastoral visits help me so much," he adds, with a new buoyancy in his voice. "I meet so many people. There is so much suffering here, but people here are happy. They have faith. They dance. They pray. It makes me happy to be among them. It gives me hope."

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Tab 92



IRI Announces Expert Committee to Support Haitian Democracy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2005

Washington, D.C. -- The International Republican Institute (IRI) today announced its Haiti International Assessment Committee, which will advise Haitians and stakeholders in the international community on preparations for upcoming elections and the establishment of a new, democratically elected government in early 2006. This international, bi-partisan committee is comprised of respected former members of the U.S. congress and international statesmen with significant expertise related to Haiti.



Left to right: Gilman, Graham and McDougall participate in the first meeting of the Haiti International Assessment Committee.

"IRI is looking forward to the engagement of the Haiti International Assessment Committee at a time when both Haitians and the international community must work together to reinforce the country's democratic process," said Georges Fauriol, senior vice president, IRI. "While initially focused on the election season, the committee is representative of a long-term commitment by the international community."

Members of the committee are co-director of the Center for the Study of the Americas at Brazil's Universidade Candido Mendes, Clovis Brigagao, former U.S. Congressman Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), former U.S. Senator Bob Graham (D-FL), former Canadian minister of external affairs Barbara McDougall, and former assistant secretary general of the Organization of American States Ambassador Christopher Thomas of Trinidad and Tobago (biographies attached).

The committee will begin their work today in Washington, D.C. While in Washington, they will meet with congressional members and staff, as well as senior officials at the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States.

Over the next nine months, the committee will travel to Haiti four times to support the



country's movement towards democracy. They will meet with leaders of the government, political parties, civil society and the international community. The first mission will allow committee members to assess the state of Haiti's political process as it prepares for upcoming elections. In its second and third missions, the committee will focus attention on the country's political atmosphere, in addition to voter registration efforts, transparency of the electoral process and the state of the local, municipal, parliamentary and presidential campaigns. The fourth mission will take place following the transition to the newly elected government.

IRI has been working with the Haitian people since 1990 to reinforce democratic values among political party and civil society leaders and by promoting coalition building, and greater engagement of youth and women at all levels of the political process.

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Related Links

Haiti International Assessment Committee Biographies

A nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing democracy worldwide

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Tab 93



Dow Jones & Reuters

**U.N. peacekeeping chief says Haiti will likely need foreign troops for several years**

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press Writer

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CAP-HAITIEN, Haiti (AP) - Haiti will likely need U.N. peacekeepers for several years as the impoverished nation struggles to rebuild its ill-equipped police force and overcome mounting violence since the bloody uprising that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide last year, the **U.N. peacekeeping chief** said Saturday.

The U.N. Security Council last week extended a year-old peacekeeping mission's mandate for another eight months, but the volatile nation will need their presence for longer, said Jean-Marie Guehenno, the U.N. undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations.

"Haiti will need peacekeepers beyond the present mandate, there's no question about that," Guehenno said in an interview with The Associated Press aboard a U.N. flight from this northern city to the capital of Port-au-Prince. "Haiti will need peacekeepers so long as there's not a credible, effective police and judiciary."

Guehenno, wrapping up a five-day visit to evaluate peacekeeping efforts, said troops would be needed while the U.N. helps revamp a police force prone to corruption and outnumbered by armed street gangs, a process he said would take "a few years."

"There's no quick fix," he said. "Rebuilding the police is not going to happen in three months, or six months or even a year. These efforts take time."

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, has about 4,000 police officers for a population of 8 million. Experts estimate the country needs up to 10 times more.

Guehenno urged nations with peacekeepers in Haiti "to stay the course" and called on wealthier countries and humanitarian groups to come through with more financial aid and workers.

Foreign donors last year pledged more than US\$1 billion in development aid, but only a fraction of the funds have been disbursed to date, a delay blamed on bureaucracy and a shortage of properly vetted projects.

"The international community owes it to Haiti to give (people) more hope and that would require significantly greater presence of humanitarian and development actors ... in the cities and slums," he said. "I don't see enough."

Guehenno met with interim officials, police, U.N. military commanders and organizers of fall elections during his visit.

Haitian and U.S. officials have warned that persistent violence could undermine the elections and have criticized the 7,400-strong peacekeeping force for not being aggressive enough in confronting street gangs, many of which are loyal to Aristide.

More than 700 people -- including 40 police -- have been slain since September, when Aristide supporters

stepped up calls for his return from exile in South Africa. Aristide loyalists accuse peacekeepers of ignoring police atrocities against them.

Guehenno said the Brazil-led peacekeepers were stepping up raids in volatile slums. But he said the risk of hurting innocent civilians hinders efforts to fight gangs waging "urban warfare."

(sj-ao)

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