

**Pax Christi USA Denounces U.S. Supported Coup in Haiti**  
*Calls for the granting of asylum to those fleeing violence and reprisals,  
and investigations into U.S. political and economic terrorism in Haiti*

**Solidarity with the people:**

In 1994, Pax Christi USA celebrated with the people of Haiti as they began to move into a future full of promise. Therefore, it is with deep sadness that we witness the current turmoil in Haiti, lamenting the promise of democracy that went unfulfilled and recognizing that in the wake of this latest coup d'etat, it will be the poor who will suffer most. Pax Christi USA stands in solidarity with all of our brothers and sisters in Haiti who are suffering, and we stand with those who are trying to resolve Haiti's problems in the spirit of nonviolence.

We pray for the Haitian people at this time of violence, upheaval and suffering. We renew our commitment to accompany them in solidarity, and pray that the nonviolence of Jesus guide all of us to help bring again, the promise of peace and justice to Haiti.

**Of Immediate Concern:**

Pax Christi USA calls upon the Bush Administration to reverse its stance on Haitian refugees. Forced repatriation of those who are fleeing from political persecution is inhumane, illegal under the UN Conference of 1951, and morally unacceptable.

We join with Bishop Thomas G. Wenski of Orlando, FL, Chair of the Migration Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who has called on the Bush Administration to "not place ships close to the shores of Haiti for the purpose of discouraging Haitians fleeing from violence and persecution. Neither should our country interdict refugees on the high seas and immediately return them to Haiti."

For the duration of the crisis, Pax Christi USA calls upon the Bush Administration to grant temporary asylum in the U.S. to Haitian refugees, to offer due process for those seeking permanent asylum, and as called for by Bishop Wenski, "identify appropriate locations for the processing of Haitian refugees that allows them access to asylum adjudicators, counsel, health care services, including mental health care, and other support services." As Bishop Wenski clearly stated to the Administration on February 24<sup>th</sup>, "we oppose the use of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base for such processing. The prison-like atmosphere at Guantanamo Bay would only exacerbate any trauma these refugees have experienced and limit their access to much needed services, particularly vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors." Rather, asylum seekers should be brought to an appropriate site on the U.S. mainland where they will be provided adequate and humane conditions including housing, sanitation, social and spiritual support services, legal representation and due process.

**The Roots of the Current Crisis:**

Pax Christi USA continues to have grave concerns over the circumstances of President Aristide's departure from office. We join with CARICOM which has stated that the circumstances surrounding President Aristide's ouster "set a dangerous precedent for democratically elected governments everywhere, as it promotes the unconstitutional removal of duly elected persons from office," and we join in their call for a United Nations investigation into what appears to be nothing less than a US supported coup d'etat by terrorists in that fragile nation.

In light of the many unanswered questions regarding the U.S.'s role in arming the Haitian rebels, the unconscionable refusal of US leaders—most particularly Secretary of State Colin Powell, U.S. Ambassador to Haiti James Foley and U.S. President George W. Bush—to condemn the armed uprising as it was gathering strength these past few weeks, as well as the devastating history of U.S. involvement in Haiti over the past 200 years, we call for the immediate removal of all U.S. military personnel from that island nation. Any perception of a U.S. occupation is unacceptable and will only complicate Haitian efforts to rebuild their shattered democracy.

Reports of U.S. interference in Haiti—including covert and financial support for armed opposition and paramilitary actors over the past ten years—make it essential that immediate multiple, independent investigations be initiated. Pax Christi USA supports the Congressional Black Caucus' call for such an investigation here in the U.S. Instead of the U.S. military, we call on the United Nations to urgently provide the necessary personnel, financial and material support to the Haitian national police to guarantee the safety of civilians, and halt the growing cycle of violence and reprisals that now threaten to engulf that nation. Additionally, the United Nations must immediately reintroduce international human rights monitors to act as a deterrent to further human rights abuses during this time of turmoil.

Pax Christi USA unequivocally opposes the apparent U.S. intention to reinstate the hated Haitian military, disbanded in 1995 by President Aristide. Under the current circumstances, we believe the U.N. to be the responsible agent in maintaining law and order within Haiti and to function in a policing capacity to disarm all armed actors within the country. With Amnesty International, we call for the arrest of rebel commander Jean-Louis Chamblain, a former army death squad commander and convicted assassin in the *Raboteau* massacre of Gonaives, and other rebel leaders associated with FRAPH, convicted of grievous human rights abuses especially during the military coup of 1991-1994. The international community must insist that no actors convicted of or implicated in egregious human rights abuses be installed in a position of authority in any transitional government or as part of any security force and that the democratic Constitution of Haiti be fully followed.

At this time, it is incumbent upon nonviolent political actors within Haiti to bring some resolution to the current crisis with respect for the democratic process, in accord with the Haitian Constitution and with the support of international agents like the U.N. Their nonviolent initiatives merit our greatest support. As Haiti charts its next steps, the U.S. should seek to make reparation for our country's legacy of oppressive policies toward its neighbor to the south. Indeed, if the U.S. had committed to and displayed the political will toward the humanitarian need requests made by the Government of Haiti in recent history, perhaps the misery and instability which led to this current crisis could have been avoided altogether.

### **The Deeper Roots of Haiti's Economic Slavery**

While Administration officials continually allege President Aristide's mishandling of the Haitian economy, little mention is made of the devastating effects of U.S. enforced macro-economic policy on the nation of Haiti. IMF "structural adjustment" programs to which President Aristide was *obliged to acquiesce as a condition of his reinstatement* in 1994 have wreaked havoc on the Haitian economy and tied the hands of Haiti's elected leaders, preventing them from achieving any progress in elevating Haiti's people "from misery to poverty with dignity" as President Aristide has poignantly described.

Pax Christi USA is convinced that without a full, impartial examination and fundamental reorientation of the international community's economic policies toward Haiti, no democratic political system can endure, and the economic slavery of the Haitian people will perpetuate the misery and political dislocation that has plagued Haiti for centuries.

Therefore, Pax Christi USA urgently calls upon United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan to commission an impartial investigation into the specific effects of IMF/World Bank policies on the nation of Haiti, placing the lived experience of Haiti's poor at the center of its analysis. Such a report should necessarily inform U.N. Development Program, IMF/World Bank, and other multilateral economic policies toward Haiti as a concrete effort to begin to address the underlying, long-standing, and currently insurmountable problems in the Haitian economy as a

precondition for the Haitian people to build a lasting democracy, achieve genuine self-determination and exercise full sovereignty as demanded under international law.

#### **President Jean Bertrand Aristide:**

Pax Christi USA members have been among those at the forefront of accompanying the Haitian people as they have struggled, first to overthrow the deadly U.S. installed Duvalier dictatorship, through its initial struggles to build a working democracy, and their unceasing efforts to regain that stolen democracy. Pax Christi USA, as the national Catholic peace movement in the United States, has had a longstanding relationship with President Aristide and his family from the time he was a beloved priest working with the poor and orphans in Cite Soleil, his ascendance to the Presidency, his years in exile and through his struggles upon returning to office. It is with deep sadness that we witnessed his departure, signaling as it did, the utter frustration that *any leader* guided by genuine compassion and a "preferential option for the poor" can expect to experience given the weight of U.S. economic and strategic policy toward Haiti. Similarly, we are saddened by the frustrations experienced by those elements of Haitian civil society who also genuinely seek to address Haiti's myriad economic, social and political challenges in the face of overwhelming odds and constant U.S. interference.

As a duly elected President of a democratic republic who has been forced from office by political and economic terrorism, President Aristide must be accorded the continued respect and support of the international community. He and his family should be provided safe haven wherever they choose, including the U.S., and their continued security should be guaranteed.

#### **The future of Democracy and Economic Self-Determination**

In a time when terrorism occupies the consciousness of all peoples, and democratic aspirations and economic self-determination animate the struggles of people the world over, the international community must awaken to the fragility of those aspirations as they are currently assaulted by the misguided and ultimately disastrous machinations of neo-liberal policies foisted by the strong upon the weak. While the future of the Haitian people teeters on this proposition, so too do the aspirations of poor and marginalized people in too many corners of our world. The recent developments in Haiti are a wake up call to the nations of the world. Political freedom, economic self-determination, human rights, justice and peace are the indispensable foundation upon which sustainable democracy must be built. To this end, the international community through all its manifestations, must begin to free itself from its stifling allegiance to narrowly conceived and demonstrably failed neo-liberal policies and the military and paramilitary enforcement those policies ultimately require. Peace, the aspiration of all people of good will, is the fruit of justice. As followers of the nonviolent Jesus, who consistently stood with those most marginalized in society in His time, Pax Christi USA remains committed to supporting this struggle for justice in Haiti and throughout our violence plagued world.