

## **For Immediate Release, May 18, 2004:**

### **Largest Haiti Coalition Unanimously Condemns U.S. Marine Activity that Violates the Human Rights of the Haitian People**

#### **Social justice, faith-based, human rights, community, labor and professional organizations release findings and demand U.S. soldiers not participate in UN peacekeeping mission**

For Immediate Release, May 18, 2004: Largest Haiti Coalition Unanimously Condemns U.S. Marine Activity that Violates the Human Rights of the Haitian People Social justice, faith-based, human rights, community, labor and professional organizations release findings and demand U.S. soldiers not participate in UN peacekeeping mission Hyattsville, MD: The Let Haiti Live: Coalition for a Just U.S. Policy is shocked and appalled by the behavior of U.S. soldiers currently serving in the Multinational Interim Forces (MIF) in Haiti. Five teams of independent observers have visited Haiti since its constitutional government was overthrown and each has reported a high level of terror in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince where U.S. Marines are frequently carrying out searches, arrests, and even executions in poor neighborhoods. Impoverished and literally starving populations are subjected to night-time maneuvers with no apparent purpose other than to terrorize.

The Quixote Center's Emergency Haiti Observation Mission, the first team of North American volunteers to visit Haiti after the February 29 coup d'état, recently released its report. It states: "Perhaps most unsettling for our team were the consistent reports that U.S. Marines had shot and killed people in poor neighborhoods and then removed their bodies in body bags." Furthermore, the twenty-three-member team declared that the upcoming United Nations peacekeeping mission should not include any U.S. soldiers to ensure that it is able to provide security and end the terror campaign currently gripping Haiti. For the full report, visit <http://www.lethaitilive.org>. Delegations from EPICA, the National Lawyers Guild and the International Labor/Religious/Community Delegation have issued reports with similar and related findings.

Let Haiti Live, which includes fifty organizations representing more than one hundred thousand grassroots constituents throughout the United States and Canada, is also disturbed to learn the details of the May 10 arrest of Annette "So Anne" Auguste, a sixty-nine year old Lavalas activist. U.S. Marines entered Auguste's home in the middle of the night with the use of explosives and arrested eleven people present, including Auguste who is recovering from recent surgery. All were taken to the U.S. military headquarters and questioned, and Auguste was held at a U.S.-controlled prison facility without access to legal counsel until her hearing two days later. According to Lt. Col. David Lapan, a spokesman for the MIF, Auguste was targeted because the U.S. received information that she may be involved in activities that could threaten their mission. The international wire service Reuters has reported that the accusation that led to her arrest was involvement in the December 5, 2003 violent clash at the State University.

Determining the veracity of the accusations leveled at Auguste is a task for the Haitian justice system, and the Let Haiti Live Coalition urges vigilance that Auguste's constitutional rights are respected from this point forward. The Coalition condemns the actions of the U.S. Marines, whose sole purpose in Haiti is to provide stability until

the arrival of the UN peacekeeping mission. U.S. forces must not continue to terrorize Haitians with destructive and violent night searches. A spokesperson for Let Haiti Live Coalition, human rights lawyer Nicole Lee declared, "Tactics used in the Auguste case such as the handcuffing of children, including a five year old, and the use of black hoods are the tactics used by death squads and terrorists. This behavior is not appropriate or justified, and is not condoned by the American people."

### **Statement of the Emergency Haiti Observation Mission Coordinated by the Quixote Center**

The Emergency Haiti Observation Mission, coordinated by the Haiti Reborn program of the Quixote Center, was the first volunteer observation team on the ground after the coup d'état of February 29, 2004. The Observation Mission visited two geographical departments in Haiti and gathered information from more than thirty interviews, meetings, and personal encounters. Security concerns prohibited the team from traveling anywhere north of Port-au-Prince. Travel throughout Port-au-Prince and to Jacmel on Haiti's southern coast allowed the team an opportunity to observe the Haitian people in both urban and rural areas - from professionals, to politicians, to peasants; from those living on one side to the other of the dizzying economic gap between the small community of extremely wealthy and powerful, to the disempowered and desperately impoverished millions.

The observation team was alarmed to discover that the violations of human rights taking place in Haiti are far worse than has been reported by the mainstream press. Since the coup d'état there has been a dramatic increase in terror and a disruption of Haiti's fragile peasant economy, having deadly consequences for the impoverished majority of the population. Recent events remind us that the divisions in Haitian society exist within a two hundred-year old tradition of class warfare, and we observed that the poor are once again paying the highest price.

Only days after the removal of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an illegitimate government was created from Haiti's private sector and the political opposition, backed by United States with the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS). This interim government has not even attempted to create the illusion that it is inclusive and has gone beyond just excluding Fanmi Lavalas members to compiling a list of Lavalas leadership that must not, under any circumstances, attempt to leave the country. In addition, this interim government appears to be implicitly supporting violent criminals-at-large, and resurgent military and paramilitary groups. In its actions and in its words, the interim government is condoning a large violent faction that is committing human rights violations.

The presence of the Multinational Interim Force, or MIF, is NOT creating a greater sense of security. One incident that has escaped any real scrutiny by the international press is the alleged massacre of as many as seventy-eight people in the Bel Air neighborhood. According to reports from almost every individual and organization the observation mission interviewed, the deaths came at the hands of U.S. Marines.

In addition, Haitian democracy has received a blow that could signify a return to complete consolidation of power in the hands of the wealthy few at the continued expense of the needs of the majority. The coup d'état against President Aristide is only the most recent attack on popular democracy that Haiti has suffered over the last several years. The aid embargo, the U.S. and OAS-backed negotiation process factors, and the escalating humanitarian crisis have led to widespread disillusionment

among poor and marginalized Haitians when it comes to the democratic process. The destructive impact of U.S. policy on Haitian democracy is unparalleled and would be difficult to overstate.

It is with the consideration of both the present and the past that the observation mission demands a full investigation into the U.S. role in the events of February 29, 2004, along with other actions and policies that may have contributed to the illegitimate removal of Haiti's President.

**Our greatest fears, the worst case scenario, do seem imminently possible:**

- In a political climate controlled by the U.S. and the traditional Haitian elite, the resurgent military will continue to assume security and governance positions until re-establishing the army has been accomplished de facto;
- As Haiti moves toward elections at the end of 2005, the campaign of terror against the poor who support Lavalas will intensify, guaranteeing their exclusion in the electoral process;
- The interim government will re-start the Haiti's destructive structural adjustment program, and the U.S. aid program will once again take priority, along with debt repayment;
- The 2005 elections will be dominated by opposition political parties who are positioned to benefit from U.S. aid for democracy; and
- The Haitian people's voices will be silenced as their lives are destroyed by neoliberal economic policies.

In the interest of preventing this tragedy, we call for a full investigation by the United Nations, as requested by CARICOM, and a bipartisan, independent commission of the United States Congress into the U.S. role in the removal of President Aristide from Haiti and U.S. funding to Haiti's political and military opposition.

Furthermore, we call for the immediate replacement of the Multinational Force led by the United States with a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission that does not include the U.S., France, or Canada. Pending the removal of U.S. Marines from Haiti, we demand Creole translators for every unit, the immediate removal of helicopters, tanks and artillery. Lastly, we call for the U.S. to adopt France's rules of engagement: to not fire unless fired upon.

Finally, we demand that any government claiming legitimacy in Haiti immediately arrest the so-called "rebels", including their leader Guy Philippe, for their violent crimes. We call for the prompt re-capture and re-imprisonment of convicted criminals, in particular, convicted human rights abusers Jean Pierre Baptiste (alias Jean Tatoune), Jean-Claude Duperval, Carl Dorelien, Prosper Avril, and Louis Jodel Chamblain, who are notorious human rights abusers.

Access the full report of the delegation at <http://www.haitianembassy.com/>

