

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: DECEMBER 12, 2006 – JANUARY 3, 2007

UN report on Haiti recommends 12-month extension of mission, cites challenges ahead

UN News Centre

January 2, 2007

Citing “significant challenges” for Haiti’s Government, the United Nations Secretary-General has recommended extending the world body’s mission in the impoverished country for a further 12 months until February 2008.

The report by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was succeeded as the world’s top diplomat on 1 January by Ban Ki-moon, covers the work of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for five months until December 2006, including its logistical and security assistance for last month’s elections.

“The Government will continue to face significant challenges in the coming months... Accordingly, I recommend that the Mission be extended for a further 12-month period...and with its present authorized troop and police ceilings,” Mr. Annan wrote, referring to MINUSTAH’s current mandate that ends on 15 February 2007.

Citing the potential for destabilizing forces “to use violence to attain their objectives,” he argued that, “The continued engagement of the Mission’s military and police will remain crucial in responding to significant threats at a time when Haiti’s own security capacity is still at an early stage of development.”

MINUSTAH currently employs more than 6,600 military personnel and over 1,700 police officers, as well as hundreds of civilian staff assisting the people of Haiti, which is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

The challenges ahead for the Government cover the areas of “security, institution-building and socio-economic development,” Mr. Annan noted, adding that while primary responsibility for ensuring progress remains with Haiti’s leadership and people, international aid remains essential.

“Sustained bilateral assistance will be indispensable to further reinforce and strengthen democratic structures of governance and rule of law, including through meeting key infrastructural requirements. This will also be crucial to bringing tangible improvements to the daily lives of Haitians.”

“Tangible improvements in the socio-economic conditions of the general population, including through job creation, is essential to forestall an increase in popular discontent that could unravel all that has been accomplished thus far.”

In December, the UN launched an appeal in Geneva for \$98 million for Haiti to cover basic services, political governance and economic recovery, as well as provide assistance to help authorities better prepare for natural disasters, which frequently hit the country.

Haitian president to arrive today
Wednesday | January 3, 2007
Jamaica Gleaner

President of Haiti, René Préval, is to arrive on the island this morning to hold private talks with Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller.

President Préval, who is being accompanied by his Foreign Affairs Minister Jean Ronald Clerisme and Minister of Tourism Patrick Delatour and other senior officials, will meet with the Prime Minister this afternoon, while top officials from both countries will meet to discuss issues relating to bilateral cooperation and regional matters. The meeting will be followed by a press briefing this afternoon.

President Préval is scheduled to meet with Opposition Leader Bruce Golding. He will also pay a courtesy call on Governor-General Professor Kenneth Hall.

The Haitian premiere was re-elected president in May last year, following his victory at the polls in February 2006.

Fewer Cuban, Haitian migrants stopped at sea in '06
Coast Guard figures show a decline in the number of illegal Cubans and Haitians stopped at sea
-- but do not portend an end to arrivals on U.S. shores.

BY ALFONSO CHARDY

Miami Herald

January 3, 2007

While Cuban interdictions are down, the number of Cuban arrivals in South Florida on smuggling and other organized trips is up -- with 546 more landings in fiscal year 2006 than 2005, according to Border Patrol figures.

The Coast Guard, which tracks interdictions monthly and by calendar year, notes that 769 Haitian migrants were intercepted in 2006 compared to 1,828 in 2005 -- the first significant decline in Haitian interdictions since 1999 when 480 were stopped. Coast Guard figures can be found at www.d7publicaffairs.com.

There were 2,260 Cubans interdicted in 2006, compared to 2,952 in 2005 -- the first decline in annual Cuban interceptions since 2001 when 777 were stopped.

The figures may simply reflect cyclical declines, but they could also represent a more complex set of factors such as weather, a new government in Haiti and use of alternate routes by Cubans to reach the United States including more efficient smuggling trips.

Petty Officer Jennifer Johnson, a Coast Guard spokeswoman, attributed the decline in Haitian and Cuban interdictions to weather "particularly during the winter months." But Ralph Latortue, the Haitian consul in Miami and Marleine Bastien, a prominent Haitian community activist, said fewer Haitians left their homeland last year because of the advent of a new government in Port-au-Prince.

'RENEWED HOPE'

The presidential election last year of René Preval, a former president and one-time ally of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, "brought renewed hope among the people of Haiti who love their country and prefer to live in Haiti and raise their children there," said Bastien, executive director of Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami or Haitian Women of Miami. However, she added, some people are beginning to lose hope because of renewed violence and instability in Haiti.

Ira Kurzban, a Miami immigration attorney who has represented the Haitian government for years, said the decline also reflects tightened Coast Guard patrolling off Haitian shores -- which has forced people to remain in Haiti.

The drop in Cuban interdictions, however, does not reflect the change of leadership in Cuba where an ailing Fidel Castro temporarily turned over power to brother Raúl in July.

In fiscal year 2006, there were 3,076 Cuban arrivals in South Florida on smuggling and other organized trips. Additional undocumented Cuban migrants have arrived via land borders with Mexico and Canada.

Unauthorized Haitian arrivals are significantly down -- just like interceptions at sea. In fiscal year 2006, for example, only 23 undocumented Haitians were detected and detained on arrival compared to 119 in fiscal year 2005. Many other Haitians may have arrived undetected.

HAITIANS' FATE

Haitians who reach U.S. shores are subject to detention and deportation. Cubans who make it to shore, however, report themselves immediately to U.S. authorities because they are generally allowed to stay under the wet-foot/dry-foot policy. Those interdicted at sea are generally sent back.

Bastien said a decline in Haitian interdictions also occurred in 1990 when Aristide, a Roman Catholic priest, was elected president.

That year 1,124 Haitians were stopped at sea compared to almost 4,000 in 1989. Aristide's overthrow in 1991 unleashed a mass exodus with more than 10,000 Haitian migrants stopped at sea that year and 31,438 the next year.

Fewer Haitians attempted to leave in 1995, a year after Aristide returned to power following the landing of U.S. forces in Haiti.

Migrant flows began to increase again in 2004, when Aristide was forced to resign during a violent uprising.

Concerns Grow Over Haitian Drug Smuggling

By Rogan M. Smith

Bahama Journal

January 2, 2007

Haitians are using The Bahamas as a transit point to traffic narcotics into the United States because they know they can't enter the northern nation on wooden sloops, according to U.S Ambassador to the Bahamas John Rood.

Mr. Rood said Haitians are loading their sloops with drugs, traveling to The Bahamas and then switching vessels in order to gain access into America.

Ambassador Rood's comments came one week after Bahamian authorities seized drugs from aboard two Haitian sloops off Nassau.

Nearly 200 pounds of cocaine and marijuana were discovered during the drug bust, according to police.

Nine migrants were arrested.

"Haiti is a problem from a drug trafficking standpoint," Mr. Rood said.

"There are numerous planes being observed flying between Venezuela and Haiti. The drugs get into Haiti and we don't have good intelligence of where they go. Haiti is very lawless and as you know there have been Haitian sloops that have been found with drugs on them coming into The Bahamas.

"Those sloops they could perhaps in some cases take the drugs to The Bahamas, but they don't take them to the United States because we don't allow wooden commercial vessels into the United States. So those drugs are then taken off the sloops and another means is used to transport those drugs to the United States."

Ambassador Rood also commended The Bahamas government for pushing for stability in Haiti and assisting the Western Hemisphere's poorest country in that regard.

"That's why we are so pleased the deputy prime minister, the foreign minister and prime minister have all taken great interest in doing what they can to support Haiti and create a climate where the rule of law prevails instead of the lawlessness that is evident in many parts of Haiti," he said.

The United States continues to partner with The Bahamas in joint operations to address the flow of illegal drugs and migrants.

The Challenge of Global Health

By Laurie Garrett

Special to Washingtonpost.com's Think Tank Town

Wednesday, January 3, 2007

As I describe in my Foreign Affairs article "The Challenge of Global Health" (January/February 2007), we find ourselves in a paradoxically perilous moment. Health philanthropy that just five years ago witnessed "large" donations in the tens of millions now routinely hears of awards exceeding \$200 million, targeting single projects. A sense of urgency, both genuinely driven by expanding pandemics and politically propelled by a wealthy-nation public that demands immediate results, is pushing money into the coffers of poor nations' ministries of health and a vast array of nongovernmental and faith-based humanitarian organizations. But on the ground, where the health needs are the greatest, decades of neglect have rendered hospitals, clinics, laboratories, medical schools, and the pool of health talent dangerously deficient. As a result, this Age of Generosity could, with equally likelihood, usher a time of spectacular improvements in the health of billions of people, or push societies into even deeper trouble.

To witness the untoward, and unintended, effects of health generosity Americans need go no further than a 45 minute plane flight from Miami, to Haiti. This country with the highest HIV infection rate in the Americas is managing one of the best AIDS treatment programs seen in any poor country in the world, thanks in part to U.S. government support. But as Haiti pushes down its HIV rates and treats people with AIDS, all its other health markers deteriorate.

More than 5,000 Haitians now get daily medicines to control their HIV infections, and the prevalence of HIV has plummeted from a 2002 high of six percent in the general population to today's 3 percent. For a war-torn, impoverished nation in which 80 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day these are grand achievements. But Haiti has gone backwards since 1985 in every health indicator except AIDS. When civil turmoil commenced in 1986, ushering in economic collapse, Haiti's medical and public health systems fell to pieces. Surveys showed that Haitians were dying younger ? life expectancy for men is now merely 51 years. More women were dying in childbirth, with a national maternal mortality rate that is the highest in the Western world. Today Haiti needs 5,000 nurses and 2,000 doctors. Expatriate physicians, mostly working in New York and Florida, keep the hospitals of Haiti alive with their remittances, Bijou says. But you can only do so much with charity.

Haiti reflects the paramount problem facing global health leaders worldwide today: There is money on the global health table, thousands of nongovernmental and humanitarian groups vie to spend that cash on the ground, and a profound sense of charity is pervasive in the wealthy world. Some NGOs have shown real success in treating AIDS and slowing spread of HIV in poor countries. But it takes a state, a health system and an infrastructure to raise all boats in a murky sea of health needs.

Tackling the diseases of global poverty has over the last six years become a key feature of the foreign policies of European, North American and some wealthy Asian nations. For some of the G-8 nations -- which have committed to spending \$50 billion a year on global health and poverty alleviation by 2010 -- stopping the spread of HIV, tuberculosis, drug-resistant malaria and other major killers is a pivotal form of public diplomacy. The United Kingdom's Gordon Brown has framed the fight against disease in epic proportions, calling for a \$300 billion war chest to execute a penultimate moral and diplomatic

battle against poverty and premature death. For some G-8 players, spending copiously to diminish the global burden of disease is as much about self-interest as altruism: Spreading microbes know no borders.

If the global community, and in particular the U.S. foreign aid establishment and WHO leadership, do not handle this historic moment with great care, the end result of this Age of Generosity may well be an increase in mortality in key poor countries.

Laurie Garrett is a Senior Fellow for Global Health at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Haitian who lost U.S. citizenship is released

Haitian refugee Lionel Jean-Baptiste was released from detention but will remain under supervision after three failed attempts to deport him over a drug crime.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES AND LARRY LEBOWITZ

Miami Herald

December 22, 2006

A Haitian refugee, who became the first naturalized American in 44 years ordered deported after losing his U.S. citizenship over a drug conviction, was released late Thursday from the Krome detention center after three nations refused to take him.

Lionel Jean-Baptiste, who turned 59 while behind bars, returned to his wife Raymonde and five children, three born in Haiti, two in the United States, ranging in age from 11 to 38 years old.

"God is good," Jean-Baptiste said in Creole from the living room of his North Miami home. "I feel like a lottery winner."

Jean-Baptiste survived a tragic sea voyage from Haiti, became a successful Miami restaurant owner and, in April 1996, a naturalized U.S. citizen.

But six months later he was indicted on charges of conspiracy to possess crack cocaine with the intent to distribute. He pleaded not guilty, but a Miami federal jury convicted him in 1997. He was sentenced to more than eight years in prison, but was released, with good-behavior credits, in January 2004.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement moved to revoke his citizenship in 2000, not because of the conviction but because the conviction occurred while he was awaiting citizenship, when he was required to be a person of "good moral character."

After losing several lengthy appellate court battles, Jean-Baptiste was sent to Krome in June.

The case marked the first time since 1962 that a denaturalized citizen was ordered deported after a drug conviction. In that case, an Italian-American was stripped of citizenship and deported.

On Sept. 12, Immigration judge Kenneth S. Hurewitz ordered Jean-Baptiste deported to his native Haiti.

But the Haitian government refused to take him back, saying that Jean-Baptiste renounced his Haitian citizenship when he swore allegiance to the United States in 1996.

Immigration authorities tried to send him to France and the Dominican Republic, with similar results.

By mid-December, his release appeared imminent. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that foreign nationals who cannot be deported must not be held indefinitely unless they are deemed a danger to the community or in other "special circumstance" cases.

"We don't know why they chose to release him [today]," immigration attorney Andre Pierre said of ICE officials. ``They just do it."

Although immigration officials released Jean-Baptiste to his family on Thursday, he remains under the agency's supervision.

"Mr. Baptiste has been released on an order of supervision, while we continue pursuing his removal," said ICE spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez.

Jean-Baptiste plans to keep his appointment today at the immigration building at Biscayne Boulevard and Northeast 79th Street. He faces an uncertain future. He doesn't know if he will be able to work or drive. His driver's license was seized. But for now, he's a free man and he's heading to church.

"I am going to . . . thank God for everything he has done for me," he said.

He plans to say a special prayer for Haitian Consul General Ralph Latortue and his secretary.

``They could have come up with any false paper to send me back. They didn't. They fought for me."

Haitian president's Independence Day speech cut short by power failure
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
January 1, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haitian President Rene Preval defended the country's fledgling democracy in a televised Independence Day speech Monday that was cut short by a power failure.

Preval's microphone stopped working about six minutes into his address before a crowd in Gonaives, the northern city where the country's declaration of independence from France was signed Jan. 1, 1804. He walked off the outdoor stage when the power did not return after several minutes.

Preval, elected in February, said the gangs blamed for widespread violence were sabotaging the country's recovery from a February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"All the people that are not for peace are the ones who don't want democracy. They only want power for a small group," Preval said. "Today the Haitian people have a historic opportunity to create a government that will benefit everyone and build a democracy in peace."

Preval's microphone was powered by a generator, and several parliament members addressed the crowd before it apparently failed. Few Haitians have electricity, and outages occur frequently.

Last month, Haitians voted in local elections billed as a step toward the troubled country's return to democratic rule following Aristide's ouster.

Preval urged Haitians to have patience for his young coalition government, describing democracy as a key to the country's development. "Democracy is a difficult exercise, but it must be done," he said.

Preval, 63, returned to Haiti on Friday after undergoing medical tests in Cuba where he said doctors determined his prostate cancer has not returned. He was diagnosed with cancer in 2001, the final year of his first presidential term.

Ban Ki-moon's new spokesperson pledges access to information
UN News Centre
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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's new spokesperson, Michele Montas, today pledged to bring her experience as a hard-hitting journalist in Haiti to the assignment by providing access to information that is not otherwise readily available.

In an interview with UN Radio, Ms. Montas said there was no contradiction between her experience as a journalist and her new role speaking for the Secretary-General. "I don't think I have put aside my journalistic inclinations or skills," she said. "The essential role of a spokesperson is to give access to information which is not really available otherwise."

Ms. Montas was offered the position on Sunday, just hours before it was publicly announced, and did not hesitate to accept. "I have absolutely no reason to think it is going to be easy but I said yes immediately," she said, calling it "an honour to be appointed as the new spokesperson of the Secretary-General."

Ms. Montas said the Secretary-General told her reform is a key priority. "He wants a more efficient and lean machine, something that can be more able to face the challenges of today – and these challenges are many."

She added that he is seeking to cut red tape. "He wants less bureaucracy and he wants to simplify the way we do business at the UN to be able to be more efficient."

An award-winning journalist, the new spokesperson has put her life on the line to expose political corruption, human rights abuses and State-sponsored violence in her native Haiti, where her fellow broadcaster and husband Jean Dominique was assassinated in 2000. Attempts to kill Ms. Montas twice forced her into exile and cost the life of her bodyguard in 2002. These events were chronicled by Jonathan Demme in a film called *The Agronomist*.

Looking back on her 28 years as a journalist in Haiti, during which she suffered exile, the murder of those closest to her and the closure of her radio station, Ms. Montas said that overall, "it was a fantastic experience in human terms and it has shaped the person I am today."

Celebrating Haiti's strides, addressing its ills
BY DEBORAH S. MORRIS
NY Newsday
December 31, 2006

The aroma of "independence soup" will fill Elsy-Mecklenbourg-Guibert's Elmont home this evening - the traditional recipe of pumpkin, onions and potatoes for a celebration of Haitian Independence Day and the new year.

"I'll serve the independence soup to good friends and colleagues," said Guibert, a Haitian-American who has lived on Long Island for decades.

"We eat the soup to celebrate the slaves who defied their masters by eating it," she said, explaining that the Haitian slaves were banned from eating soup. "It's to celebrate the end of slavery."

On New Year's Day, Haitians around the world will celebrate the 203rd anniversary of their ancestors' successful revolt against French colonists to create the first independent black republic. Haiti is the only nation ever formed from a successful slave revolt.

But while the community will be celebrating its proud historical moment, thoughts also will be on present-day Haiti, where the number of killings and kidnappings has risen recently.

"Haiti cannot go on without international aid," said the Rev. Eddy Julien, principal celebrant of a Mass commemorating Haitian Independence Day being held tomorrow at St. Boniface Roman Catholic Church in Elmont. "We must also stay aware of what is happening there now."

The 2:30 p.m. service will be conducted in French and Haitian Creole and is expected to draw more than 500 Haitian-Americans from Nassau and Suffolk, Julien said.

"It is a great day for Haitians," Julien said. "All Haitians are very proud that we have freedom not as a gift, but because our people struggled and fought for it successfully."

A cultural program featuring traditional Haitian songs and a dance performance by a youth group will follow the celebration.

"January 1 is a glorious day in Haitian history," Guibert said. "We feel important that we are the first black republic, the first to break the chains of slavery, but we know we need to continue to pull together to do something about the current situation. We still have much to do."

Eddy Leveque, a Haitian community leader from Bay Shore, said the day is a time "to recall Haitian history and its contributions to the world."

"Sometimes the world is not aware of the positive facts about the Haitian revolution and its impact to free people throughout the world," Leveque said.

And then there is the soup.

"After the Mass, we will enjoy the soup," Julien said. "It is independence soup, and it is delicious."

Haiti Blue Helmets not Peaceful
Prensa Latina
December 30, 2006

Central Bureau, Far from helping to keep the peace as they claimed, troops of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) continue stirring up strife in that Caribbean nation.

Besides abuse and sexual trade denounced by social and humanitarian bodies, the blue-helmets have staged various armed attacks against the civil population in that poor state.

One of the most rapped by the public opinion was carried out by 400 MINUSTAH agents, who besieged and machine-gunned the Cite Soleil district.

People in that community assured that members of that international force, supported by some Haitian police officers, opened fire on the morning of Dec 22, without apparent reasons, and extended attacks during the day killing 40 civilians.

Witnesses compared that incident with the massacre by that UN mission in July 6, 2005 in the same area, mainly in Bois Neuf and Drouillard neighborhoods.

Cite Soleil residents are known as the main backers of the return of former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, ousted with support of the US and France in 2004.

However, that city, considered one of the most conflictive in Port-Au-Prince since the February 2004 violent situation, will never stop MINUSTAH troops from carrying out such kind of action.

Although the election of President Rene Preval brought hope to most of Haitians, the performance of the blue-helmets clouds his effort to solve the main problems of his people.

Haiti's leader: Cancer has not returned
Sat. Dec. 30 2006
Associated Press
CTV.ca

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- Haitian President Rene Preval said Friday after undergoing tests in Cuba that his prostate cancer has not returned.

Preval, 63, said he would go back to see his Cuban doctors on March 18, but that the health of his prostate was "under control."

"The Constitution says that if a president is not in good health, he can't continue with his functions but that doesn't apply to me because I'm in good health," he said upon arriving back in Haiti.

Preval revealed earlier this month that blood tests showed possible signs of cancer, but that the results were inconclusive. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2001, the final year of his first presidential term, and was treated in Cuba.

Preval's health has added to the uncertainty facing his young coalition government, which has struggled to stabilize the divided and impoverished Caribbean nation almost three years after a bloody rebellion toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in the country, which is plagued with well-armed gangs.

Haiti's president returns from medical treatment in Cuba, says health is fine
The Associated Press
December 29, 2006
International Herald Tribune

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haitian President Rene Preval returned to the country Friday from Cuba, where he said doctors told him he did not have prostate cancer.

Haitian National Television broadcast images of Preval's arrival at the airport greeting the prime minister, Cabinet members and the police chief as he stepped out of a Cuban jet. Other news organizations were not granted access to his early morning arrival.

The president said he would go back to see his Cuban doctors on March 18, but that the health of his prostate was "under control" and the cancer had not returned.

"The Constitution says that if a president is not in good health, he can't continue with his functions but that doesn't apply to me because I'm in good health," he said in remarks that were broadcast some 12 hours after his arrival in Port-au-Prince.

Preval, 63, revealed earlier this month that blood tests in Havana showed possible signs of cancer but said the results were inconclusive. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2001, the final year of his first presidential term, and was treated in Cuba.

"A lot of people who have had prostate cancer have to see a doctor on a regular basis," he said at the airport.

The president's disclosure comes as Haiti struggles against the gang violence and kidnappings that erupted after a 2004 rebellion overthrew former President Jean Bertrand-Aristide.

Child kidnappings raise fears in Haiti

By Jacqueline Charles

McClatchy Newspapers

Miami Herald

December 29, 2006

MIAMI - The first time she called her daughter's cell phone, no one picked up. Then Maggy Dessources dialed the number again. This time, a man answered.

"Is this not Natacha's telephone?" she asked curiously.

"Yes, Madame," the man said. Dessources' heart sank.

"Natacha has a little problem," the man said, pausing after every word. "She has been kidnapped."

Dial tone.

In perpetually turbulent Haiti, where children already suffer high rates of illiteracy, child slavery and mortality, its most vulnerable citizens now face a growing danger: kidnappings.

They are being snatched while walking to or from school; hijacked while riding in school buses; abducted during home invasions; delivered to kidnappers by the family driver. And in the horrifying case of Natacha Farah Kerbie Dessources: shoved into a waiting car with five armed men as she pounded on the front gate of her house.

"I didn't think they were going to kill my child," Maggy Dessources said. In the end, she paid a ransom of \$500. But they did. Her bullet-riddled body was found near a heap of trash two days after she was kidnapped last month.

Haitian and international authorities can't say with certainty how many kidnappings have taken place in the recent past. Victims tend to avoid reporting abductions, they say, especially if they involve children.

But the Haiti director of the U.N. Children's Fund estimates that 48 youths have been kidnapped since November; a U.N. official familiar with the issue puts it at 60 since November; and a Port-au-Prince human rights organization says at least 68 children were abducted Nov. 10-Dec. 15.

"Given the state the country is in, the state of the insecurity, the state of the impunity, the state of kidnapping, the state of crimes in Haiti, we can't get lower than this," said Pierre Esperance, executive director of the Port-au-Prince-based National Human Rights Defense Network. "The government has an obligation to reinforce the key state institutions - justice and police."

At 20 years of age Natacha Dessources wasn't a child. But the student at a teacher's college in Port-au-Prince has become a poster child for Haiti's child-kidnapping phenomenon. Angry mourners at her funeral later protested before the National Palace, demanding that President Rene Preval do something about the kidnappings.

Maggy Dessources, who is unemployed, told the kidnappers in one of many phone calls while negotiating a ransom, that she had no money. After she dropped off what she managed to gather from begging family and friends, she was almost certain they would release the girl, like other kidnappers had done with so many other victims before.

When Natacha's body was found, her eyes had been gouged, and she'd been shot several times. Two of her fingers had been broken, her mother said in a telephone interview from Haiti, where she has been in hiding with her 15-year-old son.

Shortly afterward, police announced they had found the strangled body of 6-year-old Carl Rubens Francillon, kidnapped on Nov. 8 in Port-au-Prince. His family driver has been arrested. His parents also had paid a ransom.

On Dec. 13, kidnappers hijacked a school bus with seven children on their way to school. It was one of four kidnapping incidents that day involving 22 kids, officials say. All were released unharmed after their parents paid ransoms.

"Children are in a state of panic," said Adriano Gonzalez-Regueral, UNICEF's representative in Haiti. "They are having their childhoods destroyed by the situation right now. They are shaken. If they are being educated in fear, we can expect the future will not be so brilliant."

In a country where 49 percent of the 8.3 million people are under the age of 18, children already face daunting odds, according to UNICEF statistics: 1,000 are involved in armed gangs; 170,000 live in virtual slavery as household servants known as restavecs, and less than 50 percent attend school.

"They are more and more afraid to go to school," Gonzalez-Regueral said.

As a result of the child kidnappings, schools closed early for Christmas vacation and some frustrated Haitians have been calling for kidnappers to be shot on sight. Some lawmakers have proposed a return of the death penalty, now forbidden by the constitution.

But the child kidnappings may be more than simple if horrific crimes.

Both Gonzalez-Regueral and Esperance believe kidnappers are deliberately targeting kids to destabilize the government of Preval, elected in February after two years of rule by an interim government following the violent ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"The concentration of children being kidnapped implies a kind of coordination, of some kind of plan," Gonzalez-Regueral said.

Fred Blaise, spokesman for the foreign policemen deployed in Haiti as part of a U.N. peacekeeping force, said authorities have been unable to discern any pattern.

At the very least, the child kidnappings have highlighted the inability of the Haitian government and the 9,000-strong U.N. mission to control the country's daunting security problems - despite ongoing government efforts to negotiate with the armed gangs to demobilize and surrender their weapons.

"There needs to be a clear signal from the government they have divorced themselves from the people who are terrorizing the population," said Esperance. "There has to be a message they are going to reinforce the police and justice."

Case in point: A report by Esperance's group shows that only 20 kidnappers have been tried and sentenced in two years. The longest sentence: 10 years, despite a decree by the U.S.-backed interim government that kidnappers and accomplices are to be given life behind bars.

"There has to be a cleaning inside the justice system," said Esperance, accusing Haiti's dysfunctional and often corrupt judiciary of allowing the problem to grow.

Haitian and U.N. police say they are making progress with an anti-kidnapping operation they launched earlier this month, going after the perpetrators in their hangouts. So far, there have been 25 arrests.

"We've tried to stop reading their minds on why they are going after kids," said Blaise. "All we can do as police officers is ask the population to keep calling and we can try to put these people in jail."

Last week, Haitian police announced they had arrested a suspect in Natacha Dessources' kidnapping. But that brought little comfort to her mother, who is trying to leave Haiti with her son.

"I see visions of her on the ground ... I can't sleep at night," said Maggy Dessources, adding that she continued to get threatening phone calls from kidnappers even after Natacha's death. "Every time I hear about another child being kidnapped, I don't feel good. I can't live. I can't eat."

Haiti's president gets Dominican help in war against armed gangs
The Dominican Today
December 27, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- Haiti's president René Préval will apply the policy of the big club against crime and affirmed that he will never again sit down to negotiate with leaders of armed gangs supported by drug trafficking.

The head of the Haitian State has also affirmed that nothing or no one will affect the relations between Haiti and Dominican Republic while he is President, as he himself confirmed to the Dominican ambassador in Port-au-Prince, Jose Serrulle, during a meeting in the National Palace.

Préval, who will travel next week to Kingston, Jamaica, for the meeting of the Caribbean Community (Caricom) countries, has instructed Haiti's National Police (PNH) to apply an iron-fisted policy against the gangs which have kidnapped even children.

The newspaper El Nacional, in an article written by Haiti expert Leo Reyes, reports today that troops from the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (Minustah) will assist the PNH in those operations which the Government has authorized in the most violent slums.

Last week Minustah troops and the PNH took by assault the sprawling Cite Soleil sector, where armed gangs operate and killed 10 people.

The work coordinated between the U.S. DEA, the Haitian Police and the Dominican Republic's National Drugs Control Agency has reduced the operational range of the drug traffickers in the populated districts of Port-au-Prince.

For that reason the Haitian Government feels that narcotics traffickers have joined the leaders of armed gangs in the slums of Cite Soleil, Cite Militaire and others, to kidnap people and demand high ransoms, making it Haiti's most lucrative business.

For a kidnapped child's release is 4,000 dollars and up to 250,000 for an adult.

The "chimeres" gangs, without ideologies, are the scourge of Cite Soleil, where they hide out and keep those kidnapped in the city.

At the start of Préval's Administration he met in the National Palace with leaders of Cite Soleil's gangs, some of them previous members of the "family" Lavalás which supported ex-president Jean Bertrand Aristide, in an effort to give back the tranquility to the country, but cost him very hard criticism.

It was learned that even during his visit to Dominican Republic he met with René Civil and some other "chimer" leaders of cite Soleil to persuade them to contributed to the cause of peace. In order to show his good will, the Haitian leader arrived in the company of 2 leaders of Lavalás' most aggressive group, from Cite Solei itself.

The Government also offered to trade for food the guns or buy them from the thugs.

When he saw that his personal communication and original strategy had not produced the expected results, he sent the proclamation to the delinquents that they only had two choices left: turn in the weapons or die.

Hope after H.O.P.E. for Haiti?
Johanna Mendelson-Forman
The Orlando Sentinel
December 26, 2006

In its final hours, the 109th Congress gave new life to Haiti's manufacturing sector, passing a trade bill that included the H.O.P.E legislation that would create up to 7,000 new jobs by allowing Haitian assembly plants to import, duty-free, textiles that would be made into clothing for the U.S. market. While not a long-term solution to Haiti's ills, the symbolism of this action went further to bolster the morale of the Haitian private sector than anything in recent years.

Haiti suffers from many problems, not the least of which is lack of jobs. Violence and kidnappings continue to undermine security in Port au Prince. Even with the presence of a robust U.N. Peace Mission, a country of 8 million people without jobs spells insecurity. The rigorous effort by the international community to reinvent the Haitian National Police is only part of the solution to a complex country where law enforcement is franchised to many different groups rather than controlled by the state. What vexes those who want Haiti to succeed is just how to create a viable and sustainable development program.

While H.O.P.E may represent a small victory, other positive signs may auger for a different approach. A donor's meeting at the end of November in Madrid yielded almost \$80 million to support good governance. And the World Bank decision to offer Haiti debt reduction also will help alleviate the drain on Haiti's limited revenue. Successful municipal elections held this month marked the first time since 1995 that Haitians democratically elected leaders of local government. And even a new effort to create a non-corrupt civil service is under way.

But the most promising signs that may make the difference in the coming years will be centered on a push to help Haiti become energy independent through the use of biomass energy.

Renewable energy could transform Haiti. A World Bank study reported that growing energy crops creates jobs in addition to fuel. In a country totally dependent on foreign oil for its energy needs, such independence could prove revolutionary.

This is not science fiction. Haiti is a perfect candidate for growing oil-seed crops. In rural areas, where 70 percent of the population remains engaged in subsistence agriculture, developing an indigenous biofuels market could transform the countryside and prevent the urban migration that continues to swell the slums of Port au Prince.

The environment could also be saved. And the proven anti-erosion qualities of seed crops like Jatropha and Castor bean could also revitalize the soil in a country that is 96 percent deforested and where every rainfall puts thousands of people at risk for natural disasters. And with crops such as Jatropha, the bush is a natural fence since its leaves are poisonous to animals.

Unfortunately, helping Haiti to become energy self-sufficient is not a priority for donors despite the potential it represents. It never came up at the Madrid meeting. And U.S. development assistance has yet to see this type of sustainable agriculture in Haiti as a means of long-term poverty alleviation.

If real hope is to be restored in Haiti, it must go beyond the trade incentives embodied in the H.O.P.E legislation. Urgent action is needed so that a U.S. biomass policy for the Caribbean addresses not only the regional dilemma of foreign oil dependency, but also moves Haiti away from the trajectory of state failure, a threat that U.S. policymakers consider a grave danger to U.S. interests.

With Brazil as the lead nation in the U.N. peace operation in Haiti, the technical means for bio-energy transformation could get underway within the next year. The combined power of U.S. economic support, coupled with Brazil's biomass expertise, could certainly be applied to a place such as Haiti. It could also demonstrate that ending addiction to fossil fuels, a goal President Bush endorses, can also be applied to one of the great development challenges in our hemisphere.

In a country just a two-hour flight from the U.S. mainland, the risk of state failure looms large. Support for bioenergy as part of the solution to Haiti's economic dilemma -- unemployment and lack of energy -- could advance the development of Haiti, and reinforce the governance and security reforms that Haitians so desperately deserve.

Johanna Mendelson Forman is a senior associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and was former director of Peace, Security and Human Rights at the United Nations Foundation. She wrote this commentary for the Orlando Sentinel.

Haiti: Another UN massacre in Cite Soleil!
by Haiti Action Committee
Tuesday Dec 26th, 2006

The Haiti Action Committee calls for an urgent response to another massacre in Cite Soleil by U.N. occupation troops, this time leaving at least 10 residents dead in this center of opposition to imperialist occupation.

December 25, 2006

Haiti Action Committee:

Urgent action alert

The UN's Christmas present to Haiti

A pre-dawn, heavy-caliber assault on the men, women and children of Cite Soleil

In the early morning of Friday, December 22nd, starting at approximately 3 a.m., 400 Brazilian-led UN occupation troops in armored vehicles carried out a massive assault on the people of Cite Soleil, laying siege yet again to the impoverished community. Eyewitness reports said a wave of indiscriminate gunfire from heavy weapons began about 5 a.m. and continued for much of the day Friday — an operation on the scale of the July 6, 2005 UN massacre in Cite Soleil. Detonations could be heard for miles, AHP reported.

Initial press accounts reported at least 40 casualties, all civilians. According to community testimony, UN forces flew overhead in helicopters and fired down into houses while other troops attacked from the ground with Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs). People were killed in their homes. UN troops from Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Bolivia took part in the all-day siege, backed by Haitian police. UN soldiers once again targeted the Bois Neuf and Drouillard districts of Cite Soleil — scene of the July 6th massacre.

While reports are still coming in, this is what we do know right now:

A Reuters photographer "counted 9 bodies, and eyewitnesses counted 4 others dead. As many as 30 people were wounded, humanitarian workers said. All of the casualties are believed to be civilians." (Reuters)

One Haitian human rights observer personally counted at least 17 dead bodies on the ground. This eyewitness also reported:

A woman 6-months pregnant was shot in the stomach, killing the unborn child.

A man and his 8-year-old boy were in their beds when a helicopter rained bullets into their house, wounding both.

A man named Jacquelin Olivier was killed in his bed when bullets pierced the walls. He leaves a wife and 3-year old boy.

"The foreigners came shooting for hours without interruption and killed 10 people," said Bois Neuf resident Johnny Claircidor, quoted by Reuters. "They came here to terrorize the population," Cite

Soleil resident Rose Martel told Reuters, referring to UN troops and police. "I don't think they really killed any bandits, unless they consider all of us as bandits."

Agence Haitienne de Presse (AHP) said Cite Soleil "residents report very serious property damage and there are concerns that a critical water shortage may now develop because water cisterns and pipes were punctured by the gunfire."

"Local residents say the victims were ordinary citizens whose only crime was that they live in the targeted neighborhood." (AHP)

UN soldiers block Red Cross vehicles from coming to aid the wounded — According to Pierre Alexis, the Haitian Red Cross coordinator for Cite Soleil, the UN soldiers prevented the Haitian Red Cross from treating children injured during the assault. Alexis said that many children were suffering serious injuries, but that UN soldiers blocked Red Cross vehicles from entering Cite Soleil. AHP reported that "residents were outraged that [UN] soldiers refused to allow medical care...for people they had injured." Despite this, St. Catherine's Hospital in Cite Soleil reported receiving many wounded.

Why this latest assault on the people of Cite Soleil? — UN occupation authorities in Haiti claim it is part of their fight against "bandits" and "kidnappers," scapegoating the 300,000 residents of Cite Soleil. However, it is widely known throughout Port-au-Prince that kidnappers are coming from all sectors, including corrupt police officials and the wealthy. Does the UN lead military assaults on affluent neighborhoods where kidnappers are known to operate? Of course not.

A more plausible explanation comes from grassroots activists in Cite Soleil. They argue that this is "punishment" for their ongoing protests demanding an end to the UN occupation, restoration of full democracy, return of President Aristide, and the release of political prisoners. Additionally, the people of Cite Soleil have been vigorously protesting the December 3rd municipal elections, in which there were widespread allegations of fraud and many from the popular neighborhoods were prevented from voting.

Just recently, on December 16th, the people of Cite Soleil led a massive protest throughout Port-au-Prince marking the anniversary of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's first election as president in 1990. [They marched despite the UN shooting up the district the night before, in what was widely viewed as a UN attempt to intimidate the populace on the eve of the march.] In the week following the march, tensions continued to escalate, culminating in the December 22nd assault by UN forces under Brazilian command.

Enough is enough!

Join us in denouncing the ongoing UN terror attacks on the Haitian people!

Now is the time for people in the US and throughout the world to step up our solidarity efforts with the people of Haiti. Our protests, calls and letters after the UN massacre in Cite Soleil on July 6th, 2005 — and the many UN attacks since then — need to be updated, expanded, intensified. Demand an end to the UN's repeated, brutal assaults on this besieged community.

Email or fax the UN official below. Keep it brief.

Denounce the massive, heavy-caliber assault on the citizens of Cite Soleil by UN occupation forces on Dec. 22, 2006.

Demand reparations for the victims and their families.

Demand prosecution of the UN officials, commanders and soldiers responsible for this latest UN atrocity in Haiti.

To: Edmond Mulet, UN Special Representative in Haiti — mulet@un.org fax 011-509-244-3512 cc

To: Thierry Fagart, UN Human Rights chief in Haiti — fagart@un.org fax 011-509-244-9366 cc

To: Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights — ngochr@ohchr.org fax 011-41-22-917-9011

For more information:

Phone: 510-483-7481

email: haitiaction@yahoo.com

<http://www.haitiaction.net>

<http://www.haitisolidarity.net>

<http://www.haitiaction.net>

Five killed in Haiti slum raid
Al Jazeera (English)
December 23, 2006

At least five people have been killed in Haiti's largest slum during a raid by security forces targeting armed gangs in the capital Port-au-Prince.

The raid came hours after Edmond Mulet, the UN's chief envoy to Haiti, said the government had given the go-ahead for a crackdown on areas controlled by gangs.

About 400 UN soldiers, led by Brazilian peacekeepers and backed by Haitian police forces, entered the Bwa Nef district in the slum of Cite Soleil at 3am local time on Saturday.

As many as 30 people, were wounded in the raid, humanitarian aid workers said. All were believed to be civilians.

Shootout

"The foreigners came shooting for hours without interruption and killed 10 people," said Johnny Claircidor, a resident of Bwa Nef.

"Then Belony's gang members started to exchange fire with them ... I personally counted 10 bodies."

In past gun battles in Haiti's crowded, maze-like slums, people have been struck by crossfire from both sides so it was not possible to immediately confirm who was responsible for the killings.

Sophie De la Combe, the spokesperson for the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, declined to provide a toll.

"No one was killed or injured on our side, but it's difficult for us to know for now how many bandits could have been killed or wounded," he said.

Insecurity

Jean Saint-Fleur, the director of Haiti's administrative police, said: "The operation was conducted to address the current insecurity caused by the recent wave of kidnappings in the capital Port-au-Prince."

He also said he was unable to give an official death toll from the Cite Soleil fighting.

"They came here to terrorise the population," said Rose Martel, a slum dweller, referring to the police and UN troops.

"I don't think they really killed the bandits, unless they consider all of us as bandits."

Spirit plans to fly to Haiti in 2007

Spirit Airlines plans to begin flights to Haiti from Fort Lauderdale in April, its president says.

BY NIALA BOODHOO

Miami Herald

Saturday December 23, 2006

Spirit Airlines has received approval from the U.S. government to fly to Haiti from Fort Lauderdale, the local low-cost carrier's president and CEO said Friday.

Spirit plans to start daily flights to Port-au-Prince in April, Ben Baldanza said during an interview with The Miami Herald on Friday.

"By census count there are almost 100,000 Haitians living in Broward," Baldanza said. "Everyone we've spoken with is really excited about us choosing there."

The Miramar-based carrier is awaiting official approval from the Haitian government, but Baldanza said the government has so far "warmly welcomed" the carrier to the island.

The Miramar-based carrier also plans to begin service to Caracas, Venezuela, in April. Those plans are also pending approval of the Venezuelan government.

"Both cities we feel deserve better low fares," Baldanza said.

Because the airline hasn't yet starting selling tickets, Baldanza said he couldn't provide actual prices. But he added, "We expect that the people of Haiti and those who live here and travel to those countries will be extremely happy with the products we will offer."

American Airlines, the dominant carrier from South Florida to the Caribbean, currently has four flights a day from here to Port-au-Prince -- three from Miami and one from Fort Lauderdale.

But Haitian community leaders like Marlene Bastien say they have been frustrated of late by high fares charged by American Airlines to fly to the island.

"That's good news," said an excited Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami, when told of the news on Friday. "The prices have been prohibitive and there's no reason why someone has to pay \$400 for a two-hour flight. It will really facilitate family members going back and forth and maintaining important relationships with their loved ones."

American Airlines spokesman Tim Wagner said the base fare from South Florida to Haiti would be about \$289 round trip -- with taxes, about \$370 -- in April, when the Spirit flights are set to begin.

"We're the leading carrier in that market right now and we'll do our best to stay that way," Wagner said, adding he thinks the carrier has a "very loyal following" in Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean.

Air France also flies from Miami to Port-au-Prince.

Spirit, which is based in Miramar, currently serves 12 cities in the Caribbean and Latin America, including Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas.

It has also filed for approval to fly to St. Maarten.

In Haiti, AIDS is orphaning many
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
December 23, 2006

Port-au-Prince

Charline might become a poet.

Maybe a teacher or a diplomat.

She might become a voice for all the children here who live alone or afraid in the city and in villages where people seem to die a lot.

But Charline is just 16.

She takes pride in her role as surrogate mother to the other children.

Her story begins with a song that she and the others sing:

"Let us, the children, live because we are the hope of the country.

We are like a spring that bubbles forth but never runs dry.

Children of Saline ...

of Haiti ...

of Miami ...

Let the children live in peace."

Here is the first thing to know about Haiti, the bare and brown western claw of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola: It is a nation of children.

Gray hair is getting harder and harder to find. Eight million people live here; four million are under age 14.

Too many of them are children without parents.

Today, a large slice of their generation — by some official accounts, 250,000 — has lost one parent or both to AIDS.

The global epidemic, now in its 25th year, has killed more than 400,000 people in Haiti. It has killed tens of thousands more throughout the Caribbean, steppingstone islands in Florida's backyard and one of the largest tourist playgrounds on Earth.

The number of children orphaned by AIDS will likely continue to grow. Experts see no end in sight. They voice concern: If things don't veer from their current path, Caribbean society, and the Caribbean economy that relies heavily on tourism, will suffer more.

Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere and sixth-poorest on Earth, has by far the region's highest rate of baby and child deaths, the highest rate of AIDS deaths, and the highest number of children orphaned by AIDS.

This year, for the first time, anyone living with HIV/AIDS in Haiti can get the new generation of drugs that turns a killer disease into a manageable condition.

But there are hurdles to getting the drugs: bad roads, distant villages, scant information, fear.

At the same time, of the thousands and thousands of young people left, a handful will be nurtured in places where they learn about the disease that killed their parents. Where they will learn about acceptance over stigma, facts over fear. Where, in turn, they will learn to teach others who still fear and shun anyone connected to AIDS.

Charline is one whose life hangs in the balance. She was just 4 when her mother got sick with the wasting disease that the child knew only as tuberculosis. A father died before Charline knew him and an older brother left for the Dominican Republic, as thousands of Haitians do each year, looking for work.

Charline and another brother took care of their mother the only way they could.

They went into the streets to beg.

Charline:

"Every day, I put on my clothes and went to the street ...

Me and my brother, we each took a different route ...

In the middle of the day, I'd come home to my mother.

I'd cook for her. I'd braid her hair, and I'd make sure she drank her medicine ...

Sometimes when I didn't get any money to go home, I would send a message to my mother that I wasn't coming home that night."

Charline came to the street when the AIDS epidemic was in its 12th year. The disease had claimed thousands of lives. About that time, doctors, missionaries and others who worked with children saw something different: more kids in the street.

It soon became clear: Hundreds were orphans who had lost one parent or both to AIDS. The children often didn't know what killed their mothers or fathers. If others knew, those children were treated like walking dead. No orphanages would take them.

Something else they didn't know: They could well be carrying the virus, too, because roughly one-fourth of children born to HIV/AIDS-infected mothers are carriers themselves.

On the streets, children look for a new family, people who look out for one another, called a "cartel."

Charline found hers among the older kids who slept under the benches in front of Haiti's National Palace, in Champs de Mars park.

She stood out. For one thing, she was a girl.

Ten years ago, street kids were mostly boys. The girls came later, as the epidemic killed more mothers.

Charline showed up in clean clothes and then went home most nights to a mom. She was on the street, but not yet of the street, a big difference in Haiti. She was not a kokorat, the name for kids who live on the street full time.

Charline:

"A man came ... and asked what was happening to me.

I told him how the other kokorat attacked me ...

He told me I should go talk to this woman in the car.

I did not want to go ...

Very often people wanted to steal me because I was a nice girl.

People would always tell me that they wanted to take me to foreign lands ...

I was afraid that this woman was going to take me away, and I'd never see my mother again."

Charline at age 7 could have been a restavek, a child sold or sent off to relatives to work as a household slave.

She could have stayed on the street, become a prostitute, or maybe been sold and shipped over the border to the Dominican Republic.

Instead, she went to the woman in the car, a well-connected advocate for women and children, one of those unexplained angels sent to save lives.

Charline:

"I mustered my strength and walked over to the car and the woman ...

She picked me up and sat me on her lap.

She asked me why I was in the street, and I was telling her all about my mother ...

I told her that I hadn't brought my mother anything to eat for a while, that I had to go and see her.

And she bought clothes for me.

She bought me sandals."

Nearly a mile above the city is La Maison l'Arc en Ciel, Rainbow House, the first orphanage in the country, and still one of only a few, built for children of AIDS dead.

It is here that Charline arrived nine years ago.

The sanctuary was founded in 1996 by a French Canadian lawyer and her Haitian husband in response to a gaping national need. Haiti had orphanages, dozens in every major city, some run by churches, some by the government. But none, not one, would knowingly take a child orphaned by AIDS.

Danielle and Robert Penette hoped to change that. They found a home on a choice plot of mountain land — a mansion once owned by the family of the wife of Haiti's former dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Within the year, Rainbow House had 17 children, the youngest 14 months old.

The Penettes had one rule: No child older than 6, because after that, children are too tough to reach, too far gone.

But something about Charline touched them. They gave her a home.

Charline is luckier than most, living in the protective fold of Rainbow House. Twice she tried to escape over the compound walls, to go back to the city to beg, to bring help for her mother, maybe to keep her alive a bit longer.

Her mother died one month after Charline arrived.

Charline:

"When my mother died I wasn't sad at all because I saw that she was suffering so much ...

After her death, I became very mean ...

When I realized I didn't have a mother or a father anymore, I started crying.

I did not sleep. I could not eat.

But you know, it was Mrs. Penette who gave me strength.

She always told me that if I was here today in this orphanage it was because I had enough strength to take care of my mother."

As part of their social education, the children at Rainbow House who were old enough to understand heard the question: What would they do if they found out a friend, a teacher or a roommate had HIV, the virus that causes AIDS?

The questions are the underpinning of the Rainbow House philosophy: The only right way to live is to embrace anyone who is infected.

After the deaths of some of the younger children, Charline's emotions softened.

She opened her arms when the younger girls, some frail and sick, climbed into her lap wanting to play and be held, wanting her to love them back.

They were her new family, and they needed her, just as her mother had.

Charline is a young woman now. She attends eighth grade at a school near Rainbow House.

She will leave in a few years to start a new phase of her life.

Right now, she is a teenage girl much like teenage girls everywhere.

She thinks about her future, about where her path will lead outside the compound walls. She imagines becoming a poet, a teacher, a diplomat, a doctor. But wherever she goes, she says, her true mission will be this:

To speak for children who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

It is, she explains, her calling. Her mission from God.

Charline:

"If God did not see that I can stand up and fight against this disease, he'd never give it to me ... I praise God that he chose me to be sero-positive ...

It's because God sees me as a special person that he makes me sick."

In the Caribbean, as in the United States, being infected with HIV/AIDS no longer means certain death.

Powerful drugs that control symptoms and slow the path of the virus have poured into the Caribbean nations that need them most, including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Guyana.

Medicine that prevents pregnant women from passing the virus on to their babies is there for the asking as well.

These medicines hold half the key to this generation's future.

The other half: bravery, as Charline and the children at Rainbow House so well know.

Because, to get to the medicine, you have to step forward. And that means telling someone — doctors, family, friends — that you, or maybe your loved one ones, are infected.

Four Filipino peacekeepers unscathed in Haiti attack
ABS-CBN Interactive
December 23, 2006

Four Filipino peacekeepers escaped unhurt Friday (in Manila) after their vehicle was attacked by gunmen in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, ANC reported Saturday.

The Philippine Mission to the United Nations said three Filipino escorts providing security to a ranking official of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and a Filipino driver were unscathed after their armored Toyota Land Cruiser was sprayed with bullets in the violent neighborhood of Cité Soleil around 5:30 a.m. Friday (in Manila).

Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr., the Philippine's Permanent Representative to the UN, said the attack came shortly after Major General Raul Gloodtdofsky of Uruguay, the deputy MINUSTAH force commander, observed manhunt operations being conducted by UN peacekeepers in the area.

Gloodtdofsky and his military assistant were also spared from any harm.

This is the fourth incident of violence involving Filipino peacekeepers in Haiti in four weeks and came a month after a Filipino police officer was slightly injured in Port-au-Prince when the United Nations vehicle he was riding in was stoned by demonstrators.

UNICEF Condemns Child Kidnappings in Haiti
By VOA News
22 December 2006

The United Nations children's fund has condemned the recent kidnapping of children in Haiti and the climate of fear the crimes have created.

UNICEF released a statement Friday that no child should feel fear, and said that kidnappings are grave violations of children's rights.

The agency's representative in Haiti, Adriano Gonzalez-Regueral, says it is clear the children, who were seized in and around the capital, Port-au-Prince, are directly targeted.

UNICEF is calling on the Haitian government to do everything legally possible to protect children.

At least seven children were seized last week. The incidents are part of a growing number of kidnappings and gang violence in the country, after a lull following President Rene Preval's election early this year.

Nine dead in Haiti violence
The Dominican Today
December 23, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE.- A confrontation between members of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and armed gang members has left at least nine people dead and several dozen more injured in the north of the Haitian capital.

Reporters on the scene saw nine dead bodies and estimated that 30 people had been taken to Cité Soleil's St. Catherine's hospital. Several local media outlets confirmed that they had seen three dead bodies and 22 injured at the hospital.

A spokesperson for MINUSTAH stated that the UN troops had suffered no casualties, but that one of their armored cars was set on fire and completely gutted.

The confrontation took place in the notorious Cité Soleil slum neighborhood during a MINUSTAH crackdown on the wave of kidnappings in the Haitian capital, according to UN spokesperson Sophie Boutaud de la Combe. The MINUSTAH spokesperson said that six hostages had been released and 24 people detained as a result of the UN's joint actions with the Haitian police.

Five die in Haiti slum violence

BBC News

December 22, 2006

Opposition to the UN peacekeepers is growing amongst slum dwellers

At least five people have been killed in clashes between UN troops and armed gang members in a Haitian shantytown near the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The UN mission said the confrontation began early on Friday morning, but were unable to comment on casualty figures.

They said a UN vehicle was also burnt in the clashes at the Cite Soleil slum.

UN peacekeepers - in Haiti since 2004 - have stepped up patrols amid worsening security in the area, but opposition to their presence has grown.

They were sent to maintain order after a revolt ousted the former President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Gun battles

A UN statement said its troops had launched a joint operation with Haitian police as part of an effort to fight a recent upsurge in kidnapping and other violence by gangs based in the slum.

Eyewitnesses said several victims were taken to hospital, and local residents showed reporters the bodies of five men who, they said, were killed by UN fire.

Residents had previously accused UN soldiers of firing indiscriminately during gun battles with gang members.

The UN has denied this, saying peacekeepers only open fire when they come under attack.

The Brazilian-led UN force includes more than 8,000 soldiers and police supported by some 1,000 civilian personnel

Congress gets it right on Haiti
12/20/2006
National Catholic Reporter

Legislation approved by Congress earlier this month to give the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere some reach into U.S. textile markets may not qualify as a Christmas season miracle. But it surely is an unexpected victory for the beleaguered Haitian people and for those who overcame formidable obstacles to make it happen.

The conclusion of a congressional session is, even in the best of times, an untidy affair. And the messy wrap-up to the 109th Congress – the Senate adjourned at 4:40 a.m. on Dec. 9 – was no exception.

The usual interest group scramble to get last-minute priorities included in whatever piece of legislation seems likely to move in the rush to get out of town was worse than usual. Because Democrats are to take control of both Houses in January, lobbyists tied to the outgoing Republican majority had one last clear shot at the public trough. They made the most of it.

Weary lawmakers approved additional oil and gas drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, authorized \$38 billion in tax cuts, and expanded dubious “health savings accounts.” In an amazing act of outright negligence, Congress failed to act on the most basic of legislation – 10 of the 12 appropriations bills that were scheduled to be completed last fall. Instead, lawmakers passed yet another continuing budget resolution, meaning that one of the first orders of business for the next Congress will be to fund the government for the remainder of the current fiscal year.

A sorry state of affairs, no doubt.

But in that last minute rush, and against significant opposition, both the House and Senate approved measures that incorporated the language of “The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act.” The legislation gives trade preference to textiles produced in Haiti, where 10 percent of the meager gross domestic product is tied to that industry. The need is obvious: The per capita income of Haitians is less than \$400 a year, poverty so great that life expectancy is just 53 years.

Opponents of the initiative included lawmakers from textile-producing states, such as North Carolina’s Elizabeth Dole and South Carolina’s Lindsey Graham. Leading the push for the legislation, meanwhile, was a coalition of conservative free traders and religiously motivated human-rights activists, not least the U.S. Catholic church and Catholic Relief Services.

“The Catholic church has emerged as a strong champion for the Haiti provision, which to help spur industry there allows fabric from other countries to be used in the manufacture of duty-free goods destined to the [United States]. Domestic textile producers say it creates an effective loophole for low-cost apparel makers in China, but the Catholic bishops argue that Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, deserves special attention,” wrote The Wall Street Journal’s David Rogers on the eve of the vote.

In unusually blunt language, Bishop Thomas Wenski, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ international policy committee, urged textile industry lobbying groups to back off. “Pitting

hard-working manufacturers in our country against the poorest of the poor in Haiti and Africa is a disservice to the dignity all workers,” Bishop Wenski said in a statement prior to the vote. “While civil discussions and candid disagreements over the impact of trade agreements are reasonable conversations to have in a democracy, playing to the fears of anxious workers is irresponsible and reduces the debate over trade agreements to shallow sound bites.”

In a Dec. 5 letter, Bishop Wenski joined other religious leaders – Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori of the Episcopal church, Bishop Mark S. Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Rev. Felix Ortiz-Cotto of United Church of Christ, and James Winkler, general secretary of the United Methodist church – in urging Congress to pass a measure they said was “essential to the future prosperity and security of the Haitian people, particularly when coupled with steps to generate employment and economic development.”

The religious leaders had some skillful advocates within Congress, not least Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio). DeWine, defeated in a re-election bid last month, has long had an interest in U.S.-Haiti policy. In 2004, he authored the original Haiti trade legislation. The two-term senator has visited Haiti more than a dozen times and a school in Cité-Soleil is named after his daughter, Becky, who died in a car accident. When Dole threatened to kill the broader trade bill that contained the Haiti initiative, DeWine responded that he would make sure the legislation died unless it contained the trade preferences for Haiti.

Dole, and other textile protectionists, blinked.

DeWine’s interest in Haiti, like his strong advocacy for anti-AIDS initiatives in Africa, was never politically motivated. There were few votes in Ohio that would be changed because of his stance. But almost no one would have noticed if the lame duck senator in his final hours in office simply walked away from the obscure debate about trade preferences for a country that barely registers in U.S. consciousness. DeWine, and those who worked for years to give a boost to Haiti’s battered economy, should be applauded for fighting the good fight. And for winning it.

For Haitian deportees, American-style 'grills' mark them as targets for violence, hate
By Ruth Morris
South Florida Sun-Sentinel
December 29 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI -- When authorities deported Marc-Henry Petion from West Palm Beach he was a chubby kid nicknamed Pillsbury who spoke almost no Creole and sported a grill -- a line of gold caps affixed to his front teeth that served as his flashy, street-smart calling card.

Three years later, he has picked up the language and altered his appearance. The dreadlocks he once wore are stuffed in a plastic bag in the tiny cinderblock room he rents on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. He lopped them off to avoid calling attention to himself as a deportee, a classification that carries a heavy stigma on Haiti's unstable streets. He's also forgone the oversized clothes he wore in South Florida, another telltale sign of his U.S. upbringing.

But he doesn't have the money to remove his grill, so has learned to keep his mouth shut, literally.

In Haiti, where deportees are widely thought to fuel gang violence and kidnappings, the struggle to assimilate is a perilous one. A misplaced pronoun can give you away, subjecting deportees to outright hostility. But no physical trait advertises a deportee's status more loudly than grills, which are virtually non-existent here except in the mouths of youths who have lived in the United States. Some deportees have gotten rid of them to avoid discrimination -- and thugs looking to extract the gold and sell it.

"It's all I have as a token of the United States. It's like a trophy," said Petion, 27, who left Haiti with his family as a toddler and grew up in South Florida as a permanent resident. Federal officials deported him after he served a nine-month sentence for driving with a suspended license and signing a false name to a traffic ticket.

Wearing a grill in Haiti, "you don't know what might happen," he said. "I don't walk the streets."

To underscore his point, he mentions a friend who had a grill and was abducted seven months ago. The kidnappers pulled off the caps one by one, with pliers.

Once made for corrective dental procedures such as crowns and fillings, gold-capped teeth became popular in the late 1970s. By the early '80s, some of hip-hop's emerging stars began to wear them, making grills a popular part of street culture.

Also known as "fronts," they sometimes come with pricey diamond inlays. While some people opt for removable caps that snap into place, others, including Petion, have permanent caps fitted with an adhesive. They range in price from \$20 to thousands.

Herby Charles, 29, from Miami, said he removed his grill before being deported to Haiti. With it, he wasn't sure what kind of a welcome he'd get.

Even without it, he said, people shouted and cursed the bus that carried him and other recent arrivals to the National Penitentiary the day of his removal. Like Petion, he was deported three years ago.

"They're judging a book by its cover," Charles said. "Imagine you're going inside the country and people are already calling you dogs. What's it going to be like for you?"

Haitians account for a relatively small percentage of deportations from the United States. But community activists in South Florida have complained that federal officials are putting deportees at risk by sending them back to the troubled nation during violent flare-ups.

They've also asked for the government to extend temporary protected status to Haitians already living in the United States, which would allow them to stay here while their country recovers from cycles of political strife.

Haiti has been known to temporarily jail criminal deportees even if no charges are pending against them in their homeland. Authorities say the measure is precautionary, since crime is already rampant. Haiti's roller-coaster ride through rebellion and lawlessness has included reports of deportees popping up in the ranks of insurgent gangs.

"They are killing us," said Gregory Basile, standing at a lottery ticket stall in Port-au-Prince, expressing a common view of deportees.

"They should not send them here. These guys are very good. They know how to use firearms. They can just lean against a car and open it without using a key."

Once released, criminal deportees face an uphill battle to assimilate. When Petion and Charles arrived, their homeland was a foreign place to them. Petion was two years old when his parents left. Charles was eight. Neither spoke much Creole.

They became friends and now they share the scrapings of American culture that come their way: a care-package of Oreo cookies and pancake mix, a jar of peanut butter. They say they have both had difficulty finding work in Haiti's shipwrecked economy, in part because of the stigma of deportation. And they've learned to stop speaking English around police, whom they mistrust.

Michelle Karshan, executive director of the Alternative Chance counseling program for criminal deportees, said grills spark fear and can even provoke malice in Haitians, who usually associate the gold caps with hardcore criminality. But many deportees are not hardened criminals. Some simply overstayed tourist visas. Among criminal deportees, convictions range from misdemeanors to felonies, the majority related to street-level drug sales.

"I know guys that don't speak, they don't smile, if they have the gold teeth," Karshan said. "You don't have free movement in your own society."

The issue prompted Karshan to call a Fort Lauderdale dentist who fitted some of the deportees' grills to ask if he would voluntarily remove them. He was under review by licensing authorities, she said, and hung up on her.

While the gold caps represent one of the most ostentatious barriers to fitting in, deportees say dreadlocks, accents, and even posture can give them away.

"They even walk differently. They're physically different because they are healthier than the general population, and a lot have come from prison so they've lifted weights," Karshan said.

"The word criminal implies assassin in Creole," she added. "That alone puts you on the wrong foot. There's a perception they're all killers."

Ruth Morris can be reached at rmorris@sun-sentinel.com or 305-810-5012.

Haiti : Minister of Commerce expects new Free Trade Zones to open

19 décembre 2006

By Charles Arthur

AlterPresse

Vienna, --- Haiti's Minister of Commerce and Industry expects recently passed US legislation to create thousands of new jobs and lead to the opening of at least two new Free Trade Zones.

In an interview with AlterPresse while attending meetings at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna, Austria, at the end of last month, Maguy Durcé said if the legislation was passed, new investment in Haiti's textile assembly sector would follow.

The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2006 - allowing garments assembled from textiles from certain third countries to enter the US market without tariffs being charged - was finally passed by both Houses of the US Congress in the last hours of this year's congressional session on 9 December.

Durcé said, « The HOPE Act will encourage investment, and that is good for the hundreds of thousands of people in Haiti who do not have work. No investment. No jobs. »

She said that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry had been lobbying in favour of the HOPE Act, and stressed that its passage through the US Congress was necessary to attract new investment in the assembly sector. « We had some success in attracting the Dominican company, Grupo M, to Haiti, and, with support from the World Bank, some years ago it invested in the free trade zone in Ouanaminthe (north-east Haiti). »

She continued, « Three thousand jobs have been created there, and it could soon reach as many as 10,000. But for more investment to come, we need this legislation. »

Durcé said that the Haitian government was already negotiating with the Taiwanese government over the creation of a new Free Trade Zone (FTZ) in Port-au-Prince, and that another FTZ for garment assembly production was planned for the area of Morne à Cabris (Mòn Kabrit) between Port-au Prince and Mirebalais in the Central Plateau department.

Durcé, who was appointed Minister of Commerce and Industry when the new Préval/Alexis government took office in May this year, said she was aware that workers in the new FTZs had rights that had to be respected by their employers. Referring to Grupo M's CODEVI operation in Ouanaminthe, where, after a long struggle, a workers' union - SOKOWA - is now established, she said, « Thankfully that is working very well now. It can serve as model for labour-management relations in the new FTZs. »

The passage of the HOPE Act is an important boost to Durcé's drive to bring new investment to Haiti. She told AlterPresse that she was in Vienna not only to celebrate the 40th anniversary of UNIDO but to also hold meetings with the organization to explore ways to boost cooperation on two issues : measures to help Haiti produce goods and to trade them, and measures to help facilitate investment.

She said that as well as helping foreign and local investors set up businesses in the garment assembly sector, her ministry also wants to promote opportunities in the essential oils sector.

Another issue of concern to Durcé is the ever increasing cost of living in Haiti. Her ministry frequently bears the brunt of public discontent about rising prices, especially for food items.

Since mid-2005, activists from Haiti's Collective to Mobilize against the High Cost of Living have been holding regular demonstrations outside the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the capital, Port-au-Prince, demanding that the government intervenes to halt spiralling price rises for essential everyday commodities.

Asked why her ministry had not intervened to protect poor Haitians from the price rises, Durcé replied, « Haiti is a member of the World Trade Organization and we must respect the free market. In this we are the same as the other members of CARICOM, and the same as countries in Europe. We cannot intervene to lower prices. »

Durcé said that her ministry was though helping hard-pressed consumers by monitoring prices. « We check prices of items at different markets, and we make this information known to the consumer. The population knows where the cheapest prices are, and this has the effect of forcing those asking for higher prices to reduce them. Ours is a work of information, not intervention. » [ca gp apr 19/12/2006 13:00]

2 Hurt As Crowd, Police Clash in Haiti

The Guardian Unlimited

Thursday December 21, 2006

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,-6294671,00.html>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Two people were injured when an angry mob clashed with police Wednesday while officers tried to transfer two men suspected of attempting to kidnap a child, witnesses said.

The melee erupted when a crowd of several hundred people descended on the police station to demand the suspects be released so they could be lynched, witnesses said.

At least two men were wounded by gunfire when Haitian and U.N. police fired shots and tear gas to disperse the crowd, according to two Associated Press photographers at the scene. It was unclear who shot the men and their condition was not immediately known.

A U.N. vehicle was also set on fire and destroyed during the fracas.

Haitian police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said the two kidnapping suspects were later transferred to another jail and were being held for questioning.

Kidnappings are a major threat in the Haitian capital and both the U.N. and national police have recently launched operations in recent weeks intended to crack down on the problem.

U.N. issues appeal to help Haiti
AP
Business Week
December 18, 2006

GENEVA

The United Nations appealed Monday for contributions of \$98 million to help stabilize Haiti, where gang violence has forced hundreds to flee their homes in recent months.

The U.N. said it needs money for programs aimed at boosting Haiti's economic recovery and to help provide people with basic services.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and most of its 8 million people live on less than \$2 per day. More than 4 percent of Haitians are infected with HIV, and Haiti's maternal mortality rate is one of the world's highest.

The appeal also is aimed at "ensuring that authorities are better prepared in the event of natural disasters," said Joel Boutroue of the U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti.

The global body maintains an 8,800-strong peacekeeping force in the Caribbean country, sent to restore order after a bloody February 2004 revolt toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

After a relative lull in violence, peacekeepers and Haitian police have been struggling to contain killings and kidnappings blamed on street gangs, some of which declare loyalty to Aristide.

Aristide lives in exile in South Africa.

U.N. peacekeepers accused of raping girls In Haiti

By Reed Lindsay

Washington Times

December 18, 2006

LEOGANE, Haiti -- Reports that peacekeepers raped teenage girls have surfaced in Haiti, where a United Nations mission so far had avoided the sexual abuse scandals that have sullied the international organization's reputation in other parts of the world.

Natasha, whose real name is being withheld to protect her, says she was raped by a Sri Lankan peacekeeper in this quiet city an hour west of Port-au-Prince when she was 15 years old. Her mother forbade her from making a complaint, until now, nearly two years later.

"I thought they came for peace, not war," said Natasha, now 17, who was the top student in her eighth grade class before she was forced to drop out after the purported rape. "I thought they came to protect us. I never thought they could abuse me in this way."

However, the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti has investigated 34 other cases of reported sexual abuse and exploitation since it arrived in the country 2? years ago. Among them is the case of a 15-year-old girl who in September 2004 accused a Brazilian peacekeeper of raping her inside a U.N. naval base.

U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst said three investigations conducted found no evidence substantiating Natasha's charges. The girl's lawyer condemns the investigations as a whitewash, complaining that the U.N. never gave him or his client the final report.

No case of rape and only one case of sexual exploitation by U.N. personnel has been substantiated by the mission, which has more than 6,600 soldiers and 1,700 police officers. In March 2005, a U.N. investigation concluded that two Pakistani riot police officers had paid for sexual relations with a woman in the city of Gonaives. They were removed from Haiti, dismissed from the police force and sentenced to one year in prison by the Pakistani government, Mr. Wimhurst said.

"We take it very seriously," he said. "Clearly, the vast majority of our people are behaving themselves, and indeed, since some of these allegations don't pan out, I would say, it's not a huge problem."

Some victims afraid to come forward

Some rights activists say, however, that some victims are either too afraid or too intimidated by the U.N. bureaucracy to come forward.

"There are likely many more cases," said Polin Aleandre, a social worker who claims five street girls ages 9 to 13 received sexual advances from peacekeepers in front of the national palace. "Sex has a huge stigma in Haiti, and rape even more so. People don't talk about it at all."

The United Nations has been rocked by a series of sexual abuse scandals implicating peacekeepers in recent years, highlighted by the revelation of widespread cases of rape, pedophilia and prostitution in

the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2004. In response, departing U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan publicly admitted to the United Nations' failure to stop sexual misconduct and began an internal effort to fight the problem.

Since January 2004, the United Nations has investigated 319 peacekeepers for accusations of sexual abuse or exploitation, resulting in the repatriation of 144 military personnel, 17 police officers and 18 civilian officials. The world body has no authority to punish wrongdoers and only can ask that their home countries do so.

Canada's Haitian Political Prisoner

Not content with supporting a coup, Canada is criminalizing and imprisoning Lavalas members
by Joe Emersberger

ZNet Magazine

December 27, 2006

Jean Candio has been imprisoned in Windsor, Ontario since December 13, 2006.

He left Haiti in March, 2004, following the Coup d'etat which culminated in the kidnapping of democratically elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He left as a result of persecution brought about against the Lavalas movement and Party by the U.S./Canadian and French installed interim government which brought back to power many criminal forces from the previous periods of dictatorship in Haiti.

In May of 2000 Mr. Candio was elected deputy in the Haitian Parliament. He represented the 2nd region of Aquin. He was elected with 91% of the vote.

Prior to the 1991 coup d'etat, Mr. Candio was a Vice-Delegate in the first Aristide government, under Prime Minister Rene Preval, responsible for education and community programs in the region of Aquin from March 2, 1991 until September 30, 1991. After the 1991 coup, Mr. Candio was forced into exile - along with most of the Aristide government - until 1994.

The 2004 coup, like the 1991 coup, was orchestrated and financed by foreign powers, specifically, in the most recent case by the governments of the U.S., Canada and France. Canada, along with the U.S. sent its troops to Haiti prior to the Coup, which eventually participated in the kidnapping of Haitian President Aristide. Canadian Forces secured the airport from which Aristide was taken out of the country by U.S. marines.

Mr. Candio was an outspoken critic of foreign interference in Haiti's affairs, particularly of U.S. interference in Haitian politics. As a result, following the coup, his family was threatened, some of them murdered. His house was burned to the ground, while his sister was still in it.

He fled Haiti initially to the Dominican Republic and then to the United States in March of 2004.

He was living in the U.S., with his wife, from that time. From March 2006 to April 2006 he was detained in the U.S. by INS. He was released after negotiating a voluntary departure.

On December 13 he crossed the Canada U.S. border at Windsor, leaving his wife and newborn child in the U.S. while he sought refugee status in Canada, where, if successful they would follow.

At the border he immediately requested political asylum in Canada. He was detained from that time until today at the Brock Street Prison in Windsor, Ontario.

>From the time of his detention Windsor activists affiliated with the Canada Haiti Action Network, and NDP Member of Parliament Joe Comartin's office, became informed of his presence and began visiting him and corresponding with his friends in the U.S.

The Canadian government's justification for imprisoning Jean Candio and seeking to deport him is based not only on allegations against him as an individual. Canada is arguing that Mr. Candio was a "senior official" in a government that "engages or has engaged in terrorism, systematic or gross human rights violations, or genocide..."

Canada is therefore taking its brutal, anti-democratic policy in Haiti to a new level by criminalizing Lavalas - the massively popular movement that has dominated Haitian elections since 1990.

Mr. Candio can easily refute the allegations against him. He has documents (updated to September, 2006) that show he has no police record in Haiti - notwithstanding wild allegations that have been made on anti-Lavalas websites.

AMNESTY INTERNATONAL'S ROLE

Though Amnesty has not accused Mr. Candio of wrongdoing, it reported, in April, 2001, one of the minor accusations that had been made against him by NCHR (now RNDDH) - a thoroughly discredited and partisan Haitian human rights group. Canada has cited this Amnesty report as evidence against Mr. Candio. Appeals were immediately made to Amnesty asking them to state the obvious about NCHR (RMDDH) and to defend Mr. Candio's rights. [see [_http://www.canadahaitiaction.ca/article.php?id=222_](http://www.canadahaitiaction.ca/article.php?id=222_) (<http://www.canadahaitiaction.ca/article.php?id=222>)]

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS CASE

If Canada criminalizes Mr, Candio's association with Lavalas it will have criminalized Haiti's poor majority. In every election since 1990 it is the Lavalas movement that has prevailed - not through violence - but through the overwhelming support of the Haiti's poor. Their opponents, on the other hand, have shot their way into power twice since 1990. It is Lavalas opponents - not the beseiged Lavalas governments - who have committed gross and systemic human rights abuses; yet Mr, Candio sits in jail as this is written - not the dictator Gerard Latortue, nor his Canadian allies - Paul Martrin and Pierre Pettigrew. Those who have trampled on the rights of the poor - like Gerard Latortue - are welcomed as statesmen by the Canadian government.

The audacity of what the Canadian government is attempting to do through this case speaks volumes about the failure of progressive to oppose what Canada has done in Haiti. Canadians owe it to Jean Candio, his family, and the thousands murdered, raped and driven into hiding since the coup to finally put a stop to Canada's criminal policy in Haiti. Do not allow Canada to criminalize the victims of its policy.

WRITE TO THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

Steven Harper pm@pm.gc.ca

including members of the opposition
Jack Layton laytoj@parl.gc.ca
Alexa McDonough mcdonough.a@parl.gc.ca

Gilles Duceppe Duceppe.G@parl.gc.ca
Stéphane Dion Dion.S@parl.gc.ca

Please tell them you oppose any efforts by Canada to criminalize association with Lavalas movement or past Aristide governments. Ask them to free Mr. Candio and ensure that he is granted an open and fair refugee hearing.

WRITE TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
amnestyis@amnesty.org
Info@amnesty.ca

Ask them to state the obvious about NCHR (RNDDH) and express concern for Jean Candio's rights. Ask them to publicly oppose any efforts by Canada to criminalize association with Lavalas or former Haitian President Aristide.

WRITE TO THE CANADIAN MEDIA

Ask them to give this story the careful, honest and detailed attention it deserves.

Please write to editors and columnists in the local and national press.
Below are some people you may consider:

Ed Greenspon egreenspon@globeandmail.ca
Bill Schiller bschiller@thestar.ca
Marina Jimenez mjimenez@globeandmail.com

PLEASE COPY YOUR LETTERS TO

jemersberger@aol.com
if you wish them to be posted on the CHAN website

TO DONATE TO MR. CANDIO'S LEGAL DEFENCE

Send an email with your pledge to
jemersberger@aol.com
You will then be advised where to mail your donation.

U.N. issues appeal for US\$98 million to help Haiti
The Associated Press
International Herald Tribune
December 18, 2006

GENEVA: The United Nations appealed Monday for contributions of US\$98 million (€74.8 million) to help stabilize Haiti, where gang violence has forced hundreds to flee their homes in recent months.

The U.N. said it needs money for programs aimed at boosting Haiti's economic recovery and to help provide people with basic services.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and most of its 8 million people live on less than US\$2 (€1.50) per day. More than 4 percent of Haitians are infected with HIV, and Haiti's maternal mortality rate is one of the world's highest.

The appeal also is aimed at "ensuring that authorities are better prepared in the event of natural disasters," said Joel Boutroue of the U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti.

The global body maintains an 8,800-strong peacekeeping force in the Caribbean country, sent to restore order after a bloody February 2004 revolt toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

After a relative lull in violence, peacekeepers and Haitian police have been struggling to contain killings and kidnappings blamed on street gangs, some of which declare loyalty to Aristide.

Aristide lives in exile in South Africa.

U.S. initiative to generate 75,000 jobs in Haiti and 20,000 for Dominicans
The Dominican Today
December 18, 2006

Santo Domingo.- An initiative recently approved by the United States Congress could energize the duty free zone sectors in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, by generating some 75,000 jobs in the neighboring country and over 20,000 in the Dominican national territory.

Dominican Association of the Duty- Free Zones' president and executive vice-president (ADOZONA) Luis Pellerano and Jose Torres said that this was a legislation that constituted a hemispheric opportunities act of sorts for Haitians, though incentives related to associative efforts.

The prerogative benefits Haiti above all, in that country's exports of its products to the United States, while indirectly benefiting the Dominican Republic which has firms operating in duty-free zones within the neighboring territory, taking advantage of lower wages.

On such incentive is the plausibility to use textile fabrics from any part of the world in Haitian manufactures.

This is a benefit exclusive of Haiti and Nicaragua, with certain limitations for the latter.

Due to its critical economic situation, the measure is especially meant to assist Haiti.

The more than 20,000 jobs to be generated in the Dominican Republic are on account of pre-production and final touches of items.

Violence and impunity continue to plague Haiti's capital
Caribbean Net News
Monday, December 18, 2006

MONTREAL, Canada: The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (ICHRDD) has strongly condemned last week's kidnapping of school children by illegal armed groups in Port-au-Prince and the escalation in gang violence in Haiti's capital since local elections were held on December 3.

Last week's kidnappings are the latest in a series of violent incidents linked to street gangs that have resulted in numerous innocent victims. ICHRDD said in a statement on its website that the increasing bloodshed has, however, not discouraged the Haitian government from adhering to its policy of dialogue with violent gangs.

According to ICHRDD, unless this dialogue is accompanied by equally vigorous efforts to arrest and prosecute those gang leaders who refuse to surrender their weapons and renounce violence, such negotiations have little hope of securing a reduction in violence.

The combination of Haiti's weak judicial system and the executive branch's preference for dialogue at the expense of justice threatens further to embolden illegal armed groups by encouraging a sense of impunity. Consequently, the rights of victims are being violated twice: once as victims of violent crime and again by the denial of recourse to justice for the crimes committed against them, the Centre said.

"Providing justice to victims of all crimes and ending the impunity enjoyed by those who have committed these crimes is essential to ensuring peace and stability in Haiti," said Jean-Louis Roy, President of ICHRDD. "There will be no lasting peace in Haiti without justice."

A large number of Haitian human rights organizations have responded to the rising violence and impunity in Port-au-Prince with demands for more concrete action on the part of the Haitian government.

Members of the Platform of Haitian Organizations for Human Rights (POHDH) and the National Coordination for Advocacy on Women's Rights (CONAP) have documented several cases of human rights abuses, including kidnapping, murder and rape committed by armed groups.

They have urged the Haitian government to ensure justice for victims and their families by investigating, arresting, and prosecuting those responsible.

According to ICHRDD, while some progress has been made in professionalizing the Haitian National Police, such positive measures are overshadowed by the slow pace of judicial reform and persistent insecurity.

The Canadian government has agreed to provide over \$500 million over the next five years to social and economic development and toward strengthening the Haitian government, including security sector and judicial reform.

However, ICHRDD has said that, to ensure this aid is effective, Canada must also insist that the Haitian government live up to its international human rights obligations, and end the cycle of impunity.

UN Rapists Confronted in Haiti
Prensa Latina
December 18, 2006

Port au Prince, The sexual abuse charges against several members of the United Nations Mission for Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH) are damaging the reputation of that mission there.

Local police authorities are investigating nearly 34 of cases of sexual abuse against young Haitian women, involving blue helmets from several countries.

Similarly, MINUSTAH soldiers and police agents have been accused of benefiting from sexual trade since their arrival in Haiti in 2004.

The performance of the multinational force in that country, formed by 1,600 soldiers and 1,700 police members, has been questioned several times.

UN directors admitted that situation is not new, and recalled the troops have been involved in kidnappings, pedophilia, and prostitution cases in the Democratic republic of Congo and other parts of the world.

Since January 2004, the UN has analyzed 319 related accusations, and has repatriated 144 blue helmets, 17 policemen, and 18 civilians.

Children released unharmed by kidnappers in Haiti
The San Diego Union Tribune
ASSOCIATED PRESS
December 15, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – Kidnappers freed seven children who were seized on their way to school in a volatile suburb of Haiti's capital, a U.N. official said Friday.

The children were released unharmed late Thursday following negotiations between their relatives and the captors, but it was unclear whether a ransom was paid, U.N. police spokesman Fred Blaise said.

The students, whose ages were not released, were riding to school in the northern La Plaine suburb Wednesday when armed men hijacked their vehicle.

Their release came as several Haitian media outlets reported a string of new child abductions in and around Port-au-Prince. Ten children were kidnapped in the capital on Thursday, private Radio Kiskeya reported. Haitian authorities could not immediately confirm the report.

More than 30 children have been reported kidnapped in Haiti since November. Fear of kidnappings has led many schools in the capital to close until after the Christmas holiday.

Most of the crimes are blamed on street gangs that flourished in the aftermath of a violent uprising in 2004 that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader.

U.N. peacekeepers this week launched a round of anti-kidnapping operations in the capital, detaining 25 suspects so far and setting up random checkpoints, Blaise said. The measures will continue for several days, he said.

2 hurt as crowd, police clash in Haiti
The Dominican Today
December 21, 2006

Port-au-Prince.— Two people were injured when an angry mob clashed with police Wednesday while officers tried to transfer two men suspected of attempting to kidnap a child, witnesses said.

The melee erupted when a crowd of several hundred people descended on the police station to demand the suspects be released so they could be lynched, witnesses said.

At least two men were wounded by gunfire when Haitian and U.N. police fired shots and tear gas to disperse the crowd, according to two Associated Press photographers at the scene. It was unclear who shot the men and their condition was not immediately known.

A U.N. vehicle was also set on fire and destroyed during the fracas.

Haitian police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said the two kidnapping suspects were later transferred to another jail and were being held for questioning.

Kidnappings are a major threat in the Haitian capital and both the U.N. and national police have recently launched operations in recent weeks intended to crack down on the problem.

Gunmen in Haiti kidnap children, demand ransom

Thu 14 Dec 2006

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Gunmen have abducted at least seven children in a suburb of Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, the latest in a wave of kidnappings for ransom in the poor Caribbean nation, police said on Thursday.

"Now the kidnapers target children because they know the children are our hearts. They want to hit us in the heart so they can get the money more rapidly," said Fred Blaise, a spokesman for the United Nations police force in Haiti.

The captors demanded an undisclosed ransom for the children, and U.N. and Haitian police were attempting to negotiate their release.

"We are in communication with the bandits in order to secure the release of the children," Blaise said.

The children were kidnapped on Wednesday when their school bus was hijacked on its way to school in the suburb of Marin. Police did not disclose their exact number nor their ages but said they were in touch with the children's parents.

Residents joined police in a house-to-house search of the area on Thursday.

The rising number of kidnappings is threatening efforts to stabilize deeply impoverished Haiti two years after its previous president was driven into exile in a violent rebellion.

About 100 kidnappings for ransom were reported last month and at least 60 have occurred so far this month, including that of a 6-year-old boy in Port-au-Prince and murdered in the northern city of Cap Haitien.

Haiti enjoyed a brief lull in violence after President Rene Preval won elections in February. But crime is rising.

**Striking workers at Haiti's largest hospital display corpses of infants in protest
Canton Repository, Ohio
Friday, December 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Striking workers removed the corpses of 11 infants from the morgue of Haiti's largest public hospital and laid them out in a courtyard Thursday in a macabre protest aimed at pressuring the government for back wages.

The workers placed the bodies on a table in view of several schoolchildren at the General Hospital's compound in downtown Port-au-Prince.

It was unknown when or how the babies died, though Haiti has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the Western Hemisphere because of the Caribbean country's extreme poverty.

The striking employees, mostly janitors and morgue workers, also blocked the main entrance to the hospital and prevented anyone from entering.

"We're calling on the government to solve the problems here at the hospital," said Jean Pascal, a janitor. "Until then we must show the people what needs to be done here."

Pascal said the workers had not been paid in six months.

Doctors and nurses were also on strike but did not participate in the protest.

Haiti's Ministry of Health offered no immediate comment on the two-week strike. It has crippled operations at the hospital, which serves Port-au-Prince's densely populated downtown.

The usually bustling emergency room was nearly empty Thursday except for two prisoners who were dropped off by police and chained to their beds. One man had a gunshot wound to the leg and the other a machete wound, hospital workers said.

Haiti's cash-strapped government, still reeling from a 2004 rebellion that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has struggled to pay thousands of public employees, many of whom have gone months without a salary.

Kidnappers free 7 Haiti kids, abduct others

December 15, 2006

Reuters

CNN.com

Police say seven children freed after parents paid ransom to kidnappers

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti-- Kidnappers freed seven children snatched two days ago from a school bus in the Haitian capital, but several other children were abducted in the latest wave of kidnappings-for-ransom, police said Friday.

"The children were released on Thursday night. ... They are fine," said Henri Dossous, police commissioner in charge of the anti-kidnapping unit. "The ransom collected by the families was paid to the kidnappers."

No arrests were made in the case, and police would not reveal the amount of the ransom paid.

As many as seven other children were kidnapped in separate incidents Thursday, according to witnesses and local media. Police confirmed that several children had been abducted.

In a new twist to the rash of kidnappings that have plagued the impoverished Caribbean nation in recent weeks, children were being targeted because they offered no resistance and their families were more likely to pay quickly, police said.

The abduction of children appeared to have struck a nerve with Haitians. Residents of the capital helped police in door-to-door searches for the kidnap victims this week, and authorities reported a sharp rise in calls from the public with information on the case.

About 100 kidnappings for ransom were reported last month, and at least 60 have occurred so far this month, including that of a 6-year-old boy who was killed.

The kidnappings are still more bad news for Haiti nearly three years after then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was driven into exile by a violent rebellion.

U.N. peacekeepers have done little to reduce violence since they arrived in June 2004, although Haiti enjoyed a brief period of relative peace after President Rene Preval won elections in February.

Rep. Maxine Waters urges IMF and World Bank to cancel Haiti's debts
Haiti Action Committee
December 12, 2006

Washington, D.C. - On Capitol Hill on Friday, December 8, 2006, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) sent a letter to Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, the President of the World Bank, and Dr. Rodrigo de Rato, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), urging them to support immediate and complete cancellation of Haiti's multilateral debts. The letter follows a November 22 determination by the IMF and the World Bank that Haiti qualifies for limited debt relief.

Rep. Waters' letter was signed by 11 Members of Congress who are original cosponsors of H.Res. 888, a bipartisan resolution introduced by Rep. Waters to urge the IMF, the World Bank and other multilateral financial institutions to provide complete debt cancellation to Haiti. This resolution has a total of 65 cosponsors in the House of Representatives. The text of the letter follows:

We welcome the determination of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which was announced on November 22, that Haiti has reached the decision point and qualifies for limited debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Nevertheless, we are concerned that the limited debt relief available for countries that reach the decision point will not be sufficient to address Haiti's needs. Therefore, we urge you to support immediate and complete cancellation of Haiti's multilateral debts.

Over the past year, Haiti returned to democratic rule following a period of political instability and violence that lasted over two years. On May 14, 2006, Rene Garcia Preval was sworn in as the President of Haiti. President Preval was elected on February 7, during democratic elections in which 2.2 million Haitians - more than 60 percent of registered voters - participated. President Preval's election was a sign of hope for the people of Haiti who have suffered tremendously from poverty, violence and natural disasters. The newly elected government needs the support and assistance of the international community to ensure national reconciliation and sustainable development for the Haitian people. Debt cancellation is essential to this process.

According to the IMF, Haiti owes over one billion dollars to multilateral financial institutions, including \$21.4 million to the IMF, \$507.1 million to the World Bank, and \$534.0 million to the Inter-American Development Bank. Much of this debt burden was accumulated during the oppressive rule of the Duvalier regime, which did not use the money for the benefit of the Haitian people. Unfortunately, the IMF currently estimates that Haiti will have to wait at least two more years before receiving full cancellation of its multilateral debts.

Earlier this year, we introduced H.Res. 888 in the House of Representatives. This resolution urges the IMF, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other multilateral financial institutions to provide Haiti complete debt cancellation immediately. The cancellation of Haiti's debts will enable the newly-elected government to reduce poverty; improve health care, education and other essential government services; invest in critical infrastructure; and improve the lives of the Haitian people. This resolution now has 65 cosponsors.

We urge you to use your influence to ensure that Haiti receives complete cancellation of its multilateral debts without further delays. We appreciate your efforts to assist Haiti in its development, and we look forward to your response and to working with you to free the people of Haiti from the tremendous burden of multilateral debts.

Trade bill for Haiti hailed as trigger for turning around its economy

By Patricia Zapor

12/11/2006

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) - A trade preference bill included in one of the last bits of legislation passed before the end of the 109th congressional session Dec. 9 is being hailed as having the potential to help start a turnaround in the bedraggled economy of the Caribbean nation of Haiti.

In a late-night vote the Senate passed a bill that will give Haiti duty-free access to U.S. markets for products that include materials made from beyond the U.S. or the Caribbean. The bill also included provisions to normalize trade relations with Vietnam and extend trade benefits to four Andean nations and sub-Saharan Africa.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski of Orlando, Fla., chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Policy, said the break on tariffs "will go a long way toward helping Haiti in its present crisis."

Haiti had been left out of recent free trade pacts - including the North American Free Trade Agreement and the Central American Free Trade Agreement - that opened up markets in the Western Hemisphere, Bishop Wenski explained in a Dec. 11 telephone interview with Catholic News Service.

By allowing Haiti duty-free access to sell goods that are made with fabric manufactured outside the United States or the Caribbean, the bill is expected to immediately trigger the reopening of factories that have closed over the last 20 years, he said.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with an estimated 80 percent of its population living below the poverty line, and a per-capita annual income of about \$440. An estimated 70 percent of the workforce is unemployed.

The U.S. bishops and other church leaders had been pushing Congress for the last two years to approve trade-preference legislation for Haiti.

In a Dec. 5 letter to members of Congress, Bishop Wenski and leaders of the Episcopal, Lutheran and United Methodist churches and the United Church of Christ urged them not to be persuaded by arguments against the bill. A handful of senators from textile-producing states had tried to block the bill, arguing that it would hurt their constituents. But the religious leaders' letter rebutted those claims.

"According to a recent study by the U.S. Agency for International Development, trade preferences would have no adverse impact on U.S. manufacturers," the letter said. "In fact, Haiti is an important importer of American products, ranging from rice and chickens to automobiles and computers. For every dollar sent to Haiti, \$1.34 comes back."

The letter stressed a moral obligation to help Haiti, "to be good neighbors to those in need."

The Haitian ambassador to the United States, Roy Joseph, said the religious leaders' coalition was a powerful force in the bill's success.

"From a moral point of view, it was very strong, helping a sister nation only 800 miles from Miami, the poorest in the Western Hemisphere," and historically "the second independent nation in the hemisphere" after the United States, Joseph told CNS.

He said that within six months to a year the number of jobs in the textile industry in Haiti could double, to nearly 40,000.

"Our hope is not really just for the trade bill, but for the positive signal it sends to the world about Haiti," Joseph said.

In the early 1980s, there were as many as 150,000 textile industry jobs in Haiti, he said. But amid turbulent political times, many factories closed, leaving fewer than 20,000 textile jobs today. Joseph said many of those companies will reopen almost immediately. Estimates are that within two years the textile plants will employ 40,000 new workers.

Even more important is that those jobs will have a "multiplier" effect, Bishop Wenski said, from the food vendors who will have new customers able to pay for lunches outside the factories to the calming influence on a population that has been racked with civil unrest for decades, in part because of the limited opportunities there.

"If the economy is stronger, we look with some hope that the political situation will become a little less volatile," he said.

Joseph sees it as a signal to the world: "Investors will see that Haiti is open for business again."

Human rights is not just charity in Haiti
Caribbean Net News
Tuesday, December 12, 2006
by Monika Kalra Varma

Human Rights Day this past Sunday marks a time to commemorate the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also an opportunity to look towards what challenges lie ahead for realizing human rights in even the world's most difficult of situations. There is perhaps no greater challenge in the Western Hemisphere than Haiti, nor a greater opportunity.

Haiti as a country has a tremendous commitment to human rights, one that we in the United States have a difficult time even recognizing. This includes the right to health, and "the right of every citizen to decent housing, education, food and social security." Haiti, the most impoverished nation in our hemisphere, accepts these greater responsibilities despite not yet having the resources to fulfill its obligations. By our own standards of democracy, that of participating in elections, Haiti has a great deal to teach us. In the presidential elections last year, people traveled great distances, often by foot and stood in lines for hours on end to exercise their right to vote. These systems are not perfect, but in many ways, Haiti and her people aspire to be greater than we in the U.S. do.

So what does a government that takes on such responsibilities do when it has no resources? It reaches out to its friends in the international community to help it grow and provide for its people. In 2004, countries around the world did just that – they pledged just over \$1 billion to Haiti through the Interim Cooperation Framework, a plan to help the Haitian state develop the sustainable institutions and infrastructure necessary to provide access to health care, education and other human rights. The framework called for funds to be used in a way that empowers the government with the capacity to do its job better over time.

Donors met again last week to check on their progress. The Haitian government was commended for "sound fiscal policies" by international leaders including the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

The international community's performance report was less than positive. Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said that 99% of this money had not actually been disbursed. He expressed his hopes for funds to be channeled to Haitian ministries so they could strengthen their own systems to successfully carrying such work on into the future – exactly as the plan had called for.

For years, money has flowed directly through NGOs to carry out projects in Haiti, bypassing the government. Although some NGOs like Zamni Lasante, run by 2002 RFK Human Rights Award winner Loune Viaud (http://www.rfkmemorial.org/legacyinaction/2002_Viaud/) to work with the Haitian government, most do not. In many cases, the international community acts as an enabler, offering a quick fix instead of partnering with the Haitian government to build long term solutions. This approach takes an already weak public infrastructure and brings it to near collapse. Without the resources and infrastructure to implement its plans, the government has no ability to improve the public health situation. It is easy to point to concerns of corruption or the government's inabilities as reasons not to fulfill pledges or to sidestep the government, but the consequences of not improving the government's capability to eventually sustain itself infringes on Haitians' human rights. Further,

transparency mechanisms and other checks and balances can be developed in partnership with the government to address these concerns.

Although there is no obligation to assist Haiti, many countries did come together to pledge their support after many years of questionable intervention in Haiti. Once a country does choose to intervene, it bears a responsibility to the Haitian people. This line of thinking breaks from human rights' traditional focus on a country's obligations only extending to its own people. That paradigm fails to explain situations where wealthy donor countries have a greater impact on human rights situations than the government of a weaker host country, yet enact policies to the detriment of individual rights. There is a legal basis for obligations applying outside of one's own borders that must be more closely examined and adhered to.

The \$1 billion that the international community patted itself on the back for giving is not charity. Once a nation makes this kind of a pledge, it must actually follow through with its commitments and use the funds in a way that, at minimum, does not undermine the Haitian government's ability to do its own job and help its own people. Under the current system, Haiti can not fully develop its own capacity and the country and its people are forced to rely on international donors and NGOs who may or may not deliver on their promises on into the future to meet Haiti's human rights commitments.

The Interim Cooperation Framework could empower Haiti to develop internally and fulfill its responsibilities, though donor states have all but ignored it. The Haitian government is currently finalizing its Poverty Reduction Strategy, a new framework utilizing the same sustainable philosophy for donor support that intends to do just that – reduce poverty. The government developed a carefully thought out strategy to move forward. The difficulty is in getting the international community to support its plans.

Bypassing the government completely is at best wholly patronizing and at worst a direct violation of donor countries' human rights obligations. As we celebrate human rights today, we should begin expanding our understanding of rights because in places like Haiti, the old way of thinking is only enabling further rights abuses.

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Monika Kalra Varma is the Acting Director of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights (<http://www.rfkmemorial.org>) and has worked extensively on advocacy and legal actions related to the United Nations, the Organization of American States and other donor states' obligations to human rights within Haiti.

IDB gives Haiti a soft loan to stem brain drain
Press Release
December 14, 2006

An international lending agency has approved a US\$10 million soft loan to Haiti to assist in stemming its brain drain.

The Inter-American Development Bank said the loan would help Haiti attract and retain highly qualified Haitian professionals and expatriates.

The money will also alleviate a severe shortage of technical expertise needed to design and execute programmes and deliver services.

The loan came with a 40 year repayment period, with a 10-year grace period and annual interest rate of one per cent during the first decade and two per cent thereafter.

The IDB said Haiti has one of the highest levels of migration of educated people in the developing world, a problem compounded by political instability and a persistent exodus of better-qualified staff to international agencies.

The lending agency said the programme would assist Haiti in establishing a compensation programme with incentives to retain qualified professionals in the public sector or recruit them from the ranks of the Haitian Diaspora.