

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: SEPTEMBER 15 – 22, 2006

Brazilian FM visits Haiti to help restore democracy Peoples Daily Online, China September 22, 2006

Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim on Thursday traveled to Haiti to help the country restore democracy, said a statement from the Brazilian Foreign Ministry.

"The visit takes place in the context of Brazil participating in the process of stabilizing Haitian democracy," the foreign ministry said.

Amorim, who traveled to Haiti from the UN headquarters in New York, said earlier that Haiti had done its part by undertaking free and fair elections, and now international aid was needed to help its reconstruction.

Brazil provides the bulk of the 7,200-strong peacekeeping troops who have been in the Caribbean nation since 2004. The mission's mandate runs until Feb. 15, 2007.

The foreign ministry called on Haitian people to work for national reconciliation.

During his fourth visit to the country, Amorim was scheduled to meet Haitian President Rene Preval, UN representative in Haiti Edmond Mulet and Jose Elito Siqueira, head of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

Haiti has suffered an upsurge of kidnappings and armed attacks, which had begun to trail off after the election of President Preval, who was sworn in on May 14.

Some 8,000 soldiers and police officers from several countries have been stationed in Haiti for two years, attempting to restore order after the ouster of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004.

Haiti: UN helps refurbish schools in slums where guns once ruled supreme
UN News Centre
22 September 2006

22 September 2006 – Books are replacing bullets in some of Haiti’s worst slums where gunmen once ruled the roost, as scores of thousands of youngsters return to school thanks to a joint operation by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and its partners.

For years, powerful gangs seized control Cité Soleil, the seaside slum in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince that has long been regarded as one of most violent neighbourhoods in the whole Western Hemisphere. They forcibly recruited children and kept away outsiders, including humanitarian workers. Violence and increased poverty forced many schools to shut down, leaving thousands of children without an education.

But following the election of René Préal as the new President in February, a window of opportunity opened up when the gangs declared a unilateral truce, and the area finally became accessible. UNICEF immediately launched a massive vaccination campaign for all of the slum’s children and women, immunizing 20,000 children and 30,000 women against common preventable diseases.

Together with the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and local authorities, UNICEF identified requirements to bring every child back to classrooms. Water and sanitation facilities are being improved in 40 schools, while essential supplies are distributed to all students and their teachers in all 201 schools.

Now, 271 schools and more than 68,000 children are being provided with basic learning materials in Cité Soleil and other violence-affected neighbourhoods.

“There are still a lot of children in Cité Soleil and in other parts of Haiti who do not have access to school,” UNICEF representative Adriano Gonzalez-Regueral said. “We need to join efforts and to mobilize enough funds to reach those children in order to keep them away from being given guns instead.”

Together with the World Bank, UNICEF is also supporting the School-Fee Abolition Initiative, part of the National Strategy for Education for All. The average Haitian family spends a higher proportion of its income on education than any other country in the world. Only 54 per cent of Haitian children attend school.

An additional \$78 million will be required annually to reach the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of having all children in school, a small price to pay to set the country on a path to peace and development, UNICEF says.

Education campaign seeks to lift Haiti's children out of cycle of violence

By Christian Skoog

Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

19 Sep 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, 19 September 2006 – A back-to-school campaign has brought new hope to the children of Cité Soleil, the seaside slum in the Haitian capital that has long been regarded as the most violent neighbourhood in the country, if not in all of the Western hemisphere.

For years, powerful gangs have seized control over the community and kept away almost all outsiders, including humanitarian workers. Violence and increased poverty have forced many schools to shut down, leaving thousands of children without an education.

Following the election of René Préval as the country's new President in February, a window of opportunity has opened up. The gangs in Cité Soleil declared a unilateral truce, and the area finally became accessible.

UNICEF quickly started a vaccination campaign targeting all of the slum's children under the age of five and all women of childbearing age. From March to June, some 20,000 children and 30,000 women were immunized against common preventable diseases.

Back to the classroom

Together with the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the local authorities, UNICEF also assessed all of Cité Soleil's schools and identified requirements to bring every child back to the classroom. Work is under way to improve water and sanitation conditions in 40 schools, while essential supplies are distributed to all students and their teachers.

On 14 September, 201 directors of schools in Cité Soleil called a press conference to thank UNICEF and IOM for launching the back-to-school campaign.

"For the first time in recent history, all material arrived on time and without any diversion," said the Director of Ecole Canado de la Passion, Charles Linstin Martin, who spoke on behalf of the other headmasters and directors.

Path to peace and development

The back-to-school campaign coincides with the launch of Haiti's National Programme of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. UNICEF plays a major role in ensuring that the programme gives enough attention to the rights of children, and in advocating for education as the best means to protect them against violence.

"I strongly believe that violence is the primary obstacle to development," said UNICEF Representative in Haiti Adriano Gonzalez-Regueral. "There are still a lot of children in Cité Soleil and in other parts

of Haiti who do not have access to school. We need to join efforts and to mobilize enough funds to reach those children in order to keep them away from being given guns instead."

In other neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, teachers have received training, while 271 schools and more than 68,000 children are being provided with basic learning materials.

The international community is also supporting Haiti's school-fee abolition initiative – part of the National Strategy for Education for All.

According to a UNICEF study, an additional \$78 million will be required annually in Haiti to reach the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of having all children in school – a small price to pay to set the country on a path to peace and development.

U.S.-backed regime in Haiti committed crimes

People's Weekly World Newspaper

Author: Tim Pelzer

09/21/06

An article in a prestigious British medical journal reveals that forces linked to Haiti's previous U.S.-imposed interim government were responsible for widespread murder and rape.

The Lancet study, titled "Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: A random survey of households," was written by Athena Kolbe and Royce Hutson. The two researchers found that 8,000 people were murdered and 35,000 women raped between Feb. 29, 2004, and December 2005, the time during which a U.S.-installed regime ruled the country.

On Feb. 29, 2004, U.S. marines detained elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and then flew him to the Central African Republic. The subsequent U.S.-installed government, headed by former Miami businessman Gerard Latortue, ruled the country for the next 22 months.

The study reports that the Haitian National Police and other government security forces during that time were responsible for 21.7 percent of killings. Former or demobilized soldiers were responsible for 13 percent and anti-Lavalas gangs (Lavalas was Aristide's party) for another 13 percent. Criminals accounted for the balance.

The national police carried out 13.8 percent of rapes, anti-Lavalas gangs 11.7 percent and former soldiers 3.2 percent. More than half of the 35,000 rape victims were under age 18, many of them children. The authors emphasize that the rape figures are probably conservative, as rape victims are usually reluctant to report sexual violence. Criminals and unknown assailants committed the remaining rapes.

The report also mentions a range of other crimes, from kidnapping and physical assaults to death threats, where forces linked to the Latortue government were heavily implicated.

Foreign soldiers from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti were also singled out, making 19.6 percent of death threats, 14.4 percent of rape threats and 16.8 percent threats of bodily violence. "Of the UN troops identified, half were from Brazil or Jordan," write Kolbe and Hutson. "Brazilian and Jordanian troops were also noted by respondents for issuing the majority of physical threats and threats of sexual violence by foreign soldiers."

According to the study, while Lavalas supporters were not responsible for any murders, rapes or kidnapping, participants identified them as making 2.9 percent of death threats, 6.2 percent of threats of physical violence and 1.2 percent of threats of sexual violence.

The authors of the Lancet peer-reviewed study interviewed 5,720 randomly selected Haitians living in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince and its metropolitan area. The authors admit the limitations of their study, as it does not address violence committed outside the capital.

“The newly elected government of Rene Preval, the UN leadership in Haiti and social service non-government organizations need to take concrete measures to investigate the extent of human rights violations throughout the country,” Kolbe and Hutson write. “Understanding the extent and severity of abuses experienced by individuals and communities can provide the necessary information for developing programs to address the health consequences and alleviate the emotional suffering of victims.”

tpelzer@shaw.ca

Haiti eligible for debt-relief under IMF programme

AP

Jamaica Observer

Wednesday, September 20, 2006

SINGAPORE (AP) - Haiti is eligible for debt-relief under an International Monetary Fund program, a fund official has said.

The fund's executive board earlier this month in a debt sustainability analysis determined that the country was eligible for assistance, Takatoshi Kato, deputy managing director of the fund, said in a statement released Monday.

The release didn't say how much debt relief the country may receive.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has long suffered from oppression and instability and plagued by near constant political turmoil for the past two decades.

The Caribbean country is struggling to recover from a bloody 2004 rebel uprising that toppled then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and pushed the country deeper into despair.

The board cited Haiti's "satisfactory track record" under an emergency assistance program from 2004-2006, said the statement.

"They welcomed the new government's commitment to policies aimed at sustaining macroeconomic stability and creating conditions for sustainable growth," Kato said of the IMF board.

The board members said that Haiti continues to face "daunting challenges, particularly in the areas of security, social conditions, and sustained income growth", according to Kato.

**U.S.-Based Organizations: Full Debt Cancellation for Haiti Needed Immediately
Announced IMF/World Bank debt relief program will provide only limited relief, with painful conditions**

Common Dreams Newswire, ME

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 20, 2006

CONTACT: Jubilee USA Network * Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti * TransAfrica Forum * RFK Memorial Center for Human Rights
Brian Concannon, Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti: 541-263-0029
Nicole Lee, TransAfrica Forum: 202-223-1960 x134
Monika Kalra Varma, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, 202-463-7575, x228
Neil Watkins, Jubilee USA Network: 202-783-0129

WASHINGTON - September 20 - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) gave much needed debt relief for Haiti a green light on Monday, but the road ahead is still dangerous for Haiti's poor, stated a coalition of US organizations today. The IMF's Executive Board announced that Haiti qualifies for its Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) program that also applies to World Bank debt. The groups characterize this as a step in the right direction, but Haiti faces at least two more years of delay before it reaches completion point and is eligible for 100% cancellation.

Several U.S.-based organizations working on poverty and human rights in Haiti are concerned that the IMF and World Bank debt relief program will require painful economic measures that will make Haitians, the poorest people in the Americas, even more vulnerable to death and disease. In the meantime, the Haitian government will be forced to make \$60 million a year in debt payments, money that would be better spent tackling Haiti's dire health and education problems.

Haiti's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) has shrunk 40% since 1980. Most Haitians struggle to survive on less than \$1 per day. Life expectancy is only 53 years and nearly a quarter of children under 5 years old are chronically malnourished. Less than half of primary school-aged children attend school. Most people do not have access to clean water.

"Children will die of preventable water-borne diseases today, tomorrow and every day for months and years to come because of past restrictions imposed by the IMF and other lending institutions. Children in desperate need cannot wait three years for the IMF's process to be completed," said Nicole Lee, Operations Director of TransAfrica Forum. "Immediate debt relief would save lives immediately."

Before Haiti receives full debt cancellation under HIPC, the IMF mandates that it undertake "further macroeconomic, structural and social reforms." Past IMF "reforms" imposed on Haiti – including curtailing support for agricultural production and cutting social spending – have worsened Haiti's chronic poverty.

"We are worried that the IMF's medicine may be worse than the disease," said Neil Watkins, National Coordinator of the Jubilee USA Network. "The HIPC conditionalities will aggravate the very problems that debt cancellation is supposed to tackle. Haiti needs immediate debt cancellation now."

Almost half of Haiti's \$1.3 billion external debt is for loans made to the corrupt and brutal dictatorships of Francois and Jean-Claude Duvalier. "The banks let the Duvaliers use loans for private armies and Manhattan shopping trips. Now Haiti's hungry poor must tighten their belts to pay the bill." said Brian Concannon Jr. Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. "Haiti's debt is onerous, but it is also odious."

Over half of Haiti's public external debt is owed to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which participates in HIPC but has not yet followed the lead of the G-8, the IMF, and the World Bank to provide 100% debt stock cancellation. Monika Kalra Varma, Acting Director of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, notes that "the IDB has been considering a program that would fully cancel Haiti's debt to it, but it needs to move from consideration into action, now."

HR 888, a resolution introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Maxine Waters of California has 60 co-sponsors and would commit the U.S. Government to immediate and complete debt cancellation for Haiti.

IMF Executive Board Deems Haiti Eligible for Assistance Under the HIPC Initiative
Press Release - International Monetary Fund
September 18, 2006

Mr. Takatoshi Kato, Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), issued the following statement today:

"On September 06, the IMF Executive Board considered the preliminary assessment of Haiti's eligibility under the enhanced HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) Initiative. The debt sustainability analysis, conducted jointly by the staff of the IMF and the World Bank in close collaboration with the authorities, shows that Haiti's external debt as of end-September 2005 exceeded the sustainability threshold established under the enhanced HIPC Initiative. The Fund therefore considers that Haiti is eligible for assistance under the enhanced HIPC Initiative.

"Executive Directors noted Haiti's satisfactory track record under the Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance (EPCA) programs during 2004-06. They welcomed the new government's commitment to policies aimed at sustaining macroeconomic stability and creating conditions for sustainable growth.

"Looking ahead, Directors cautioned that Haiti continues to face daunting challenges, particularly in the areas of security, social conditions, and sustained income growth, and emphasized the need for continued financial support from and engagement with the international community. Directors stressed that Haiti should continue its efforts to enhance governance, strengthen public institutions, promote private-sector led growth, and to orient public expenditure and the budget toward poverty-reducing activities. Directors stressed the importance of employing mechanisms that are in place to monitor the use of resources made available by the HIPC Initiative and encouraged maximum transparency in the use of those resources. Continued reforms in macroeconomic, structural, and social areas and close attention to improving the security situation will be essential in enabling Haiti to reach its floating completion point," Mr. Kato said.

Haiti eligible for major debt relief, IMF/WB say
19 Sep 2006

Source: Reuters

By Gilbert Le Gras

SINGAPORE, Sept 19 (Reuters) - Haiti qualifies for a debt write-off under a major multilateral relief effort, the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday, marking a new stage in donors' attempts to bolster the poorest country in the Americas.

The IMF said in July that relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative could be worth \$14 million in the first year for the impoverished, turbulent Caribbean country and could unlock potential additional contributions worth \$22 million.

"We hope that the discussion of decision point at both the IMF board and Bank board takes place in early November. At that point they could become eligible for interim debt relief," said World Bank Latin America and Caribbean director Caroline Anstey.

"They receive the bulk of the debt relief at the completion point, which follows some two or two-and-a-half years later," Anstey added. "We believe it is very important that the savings from debt relief are spent on key social areas: health, access to clean water, education."

A meeting of 26 donor countries and agencies in July topped up and extended a two-year-old aid fund with \$750 million for 13 more months after the original \$1.1 billion package expired.

Donors meet again in Spain in November to review Haiti's progress in implementing its budget and social programmes.

In a statement, IMF deputy managing director Takatoshi Kato said Haiti had a satisfactory track record but faces daunting challenges in security, social conditions and income growth.

As a result, the country would need "continued financial support from and engagement with the international community".

Last month the United Nations renewed the mandate of its 9,000-strong peacekeeping force for six months, despite U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's request for a year-long extension and a World Bank official's call for a larger security force.

The IMF's Kato said further macroeconomic, structural and social reforms, as well as close attention to improving security, would be essential in enabling Haiti to reach the point where creditors agree to reduce its debt burden.

Haiti's external debt is about \$1.3 billion, of which about \$550 million is owed to the Inter-American Development Bank, which is also considering a debt write-off.

IADB President Luis Alberto Moreno, who is attending the Singapore meetings, was not immediately available for comment.

"Immediate cancellation of Haiti's debt to the IMF, World Bank and IADB would free much-needed resources needed to fight poverty," non-governmental organisations Jubilee Network USA and Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti said in July.

To date, debt reduction packages have been approved under the HIPC initiative for 29 countries, providing \$35 billion in debt-service relief over time.

The initiative was launched in 1996 with the aim of ensuring no developing country faced a debt burden it could not manage.

Venezuela Bank Expands in Latin America
Houston Chronicle
The Associated Press
September 20, 2006

CARACAS, Venezuela — Venezuela's state development bank plans to open branches in Bolivia, Honduras, Guatemala and Haiti, the bank president said Wednesday.

"We foresee opening offices in Haiti, Guatemala and Honduras," said Edgard Hernandez Behrens who heads the Bank of Economic and Social Development, or Bandes, which is 75 percent owned by the Venezuelan government.

Bandes also plans to provide US\$15 million (euro12 million) in December to its Uruguayan branch, known as Cofac, and is further considering providing funds for its Union branch in Bolivia, Hernandez Behrens said.

President Hugo Chavez, whose country is the world's fifth-largest oil exporter, has lent millions for cooperative projects with friendly Latin America governments.

In March, Bandes officials purchased Cofac, an Uruguayan credit cooperative, for US\$10 million (euro8 million) and injected an additional US\$10 million (euro8 million) to capitalize it.

Chavez's government has also signed agreements with the administration of Bolivian President Evo Morales, a close ally, which have included a donation of US\$30 million (euro24 million) for social programs for the poor in the Andean country.

Chavez says he is promoting regional integration through such efforts, but his critics accuse him of squandering Venezuela's oil wealth overseas and failing to do enough to combat poverty at home.

Dominican President wants the world to clamp down on crime
The Dominican Today
September 21, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- President Leonel Fernandez yesterday asked the international community to heighten the control and interdiction mechanisms to restrain the illicit trafficking of drugs and weapons and people because they erode the citizen security.

The Dominican leader also said that his country has assumed a strong commitment with the reestablishment of Haiti's stability, and applauded the UN Security Council's decision to extend to six months the mandate of the Stabilization Mission (Minustah) in the neighboring country.

In a speech before the 61st UN general assembly, the chief executive also spoke of the violence and crime that affects the Dominican Republic. "One of the topics of global reach that generates the greatest concern in the Dominican Republic and other areas of the world, is that of citizen security. We have observed, with deep concern, how in the last years has taken place an erosion of the internal security of nations, generating an increase in the violence and criminality index," he said.

The chief executive said that this situation, has been undoubtedly motivated by a set of external factors, such as drug trafficking, guns, and of people and other expressions wavering from the collective conduct.

"Faced with all this dramatic situation, which is leading to some nations to exasperation, the Dominican Republic maintains an attitude of monitoring and permanent struggle, and aspires to that the international community hardens the mechanisms of control and interdiction that are required to restrain this new ill that only contributes to seed fear and uneasiness in defenseless civil populaces," he added.

In another topic, the governor said that also of great importance for the advance and well-being of nations, and which constitutes the general assembly agenda's main topic, is the one relative to the relation between migrations with sustainable development.

"We agree with the criterion that the migratory phenomenon represents a great ally in the cause of development. However, in the present modern world of globalization there is an implicit contradiction in the fact that the free circulation of merchandise, capitals and services is promoted, while rigorous restrictions to the free circulation of manual labor are established," he said.

He recognized that although each State exerts a sovereign right in the application of immigration policies, "it is our criterion that asymmetry currently exists between the free circulation of the production factors, and the limitations to the circulation of people must be extinguished with time."

He said that the immigration is neither an invasion of the poor towards the developed countries, nor threatens the present civilization.

On Haiti

"For our country, the increase of international collaboration to maintain the rate of reconstruction that sister nation is of particular interest. In what concerns us, our relations are also express through the Mixed Dominican-Haitian Commission," he said.

World Immigrations chief wants a “friendly” Dominican-Haitian pact
The Dominican Today
September 20, 2006

Santo Domingo. - The director general of the International Organization for Immigrations (IOM) last night suggested that Dominican Republic and Haiti reach immigration agreements in a "friendly" manner.

The American Brunson McKinley feels that the Caribbean's Hispaniola island countries are capable of confronting problems such as the trafficking of people across their almost 400 kilometer long border.

"Dominican Republic is an example of the positive that migrations are. Just take the case of the importance for the economy which receives remittances from its citizens abroad," he said in a press conference in the Foreign Ministry.

The OIM director, who arrived in the country last night from Haiti, said that he met with that country's president, René Préval, and spoke of the migratory situation.

"We believe in a long term solution, because it has been shown that repatriations have become a vicious circle," he said, adding that his organism has "some proposals" to present to the Dominican authorities on the topic.

"It's not only in this island where there are immigrations problems, it's a topic that touches many parts of the world and the important thing is to look for lasting solutions, that the rights of the immigrants are not harmed," he said.

The head of the OIM said that in the coming months Dominican Republic and Haiti could announce important decisions regarding common problems, such as the trafficking of people across the border.

According to official figures, about one million Haitians reside illegally in the Dominican Republic.

McKinley also briefly addressed the new migratory policies implemented by the United States, and considered that Mexico is "definitively" the country most affected by this situation.

The OIM director, who visits the country for the first time, is scheduled to meet with president Leonel Fernandez when the Dominican chief executive returns from the United Nations, and other local authorities.

Lancet's Haiti human rights investigator receives death threats
Death threats against Athena Kolbe after Charles Arthur of the 'Haiti Support Group'
circulated investigator's family and home address, says witness
Haiti Action Committee
September 19, 2006

by Jeb Sprague & Joe Emersberger

"You are a dog ... you should die. We are going to necklace you," whispered a British-accented caller into the phone. It was the latest in a round of death threats that Athena Kolbe, Human Rights Investigator and Master's level social worker at Wayne State University, had received. According to police officials, Kolbe first began receiving threatening calls at home and on her cell phone at 4:00 AM on the morning of Monday September 4.

Kolbe, who co-coordinated a human rights study carried out in late 2005 by the Wayne State University School of Social Work with Dr. Royce Hutson, led a team of twelve Haitian interviewers in surveying 1260 randomly selected households in the greater Port-au-Prince area. The Haitian researchers interviewed Port-au-Prince residents about their experiences with human rights abuses since the installation of Gerald Latortue as interim Prime Minister following the violent overthrow of Haiti's elected President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The Lancet article titled "Human Rights Abuse and Other Criminal Violations in Port-au-Prince Haiti: A Random Survey of Households" exposes massive human rights violations in Haiti, under the foreign-installed interim government of Gerald Latortue. It estimates that 8000 persons were murdered and approximately 35000 sexually assaulted in the greater Port-au-Prince area between February 2004 and December 2005. More than 90% percent of the sexual assaults reported in the study-involved penetration, explained the authors. The study first became public knowledge on August 30 when Pacifica Radio's Flashpoints aired an interview with Kolbe and Royce discussing the findings of the survey. It has stirred controversy ever since.

Days after an interview with Flashpoints' Dennis Bernstein, Charles Arthur, president of the UK's Haiti Support Group, denounced Kolbe as a "pro-Lavalas Family journalist" implying that Kolbe manipulated the survey findings. Articles about the study were quickly published in the Guardian and the Toronto Globe and Mail in which Charles Arthur was prominently quoted, but much remained unexplored --most conspicuously the findings of the study--but also what Kolbe has had to endure since the study was published.

It was her volunteer service in 1995 with Lafanmi Selavi, an orphanage for street children and child domestic servants in Port-au-Prince which Arthur claimed makes Kolbe too "biased" to conduct research. Aristide founded the orphanage when he was a parish priest ten years prior. Kolbe met Aristide and says she was "impressed with commitment to promoting the idea that children are people who need to be loved, respected and valued." Kolbe volunteered in several orphanages during postings in Haiti, Croatia and Israel.

Kolbe formerly wrote for the Pacific News Service writing under the name Lyn Duff (her mother's maiden name), publishing a smattering of articles during the next ten years about the experiences of marginalized Haitians including rape survivors, homeless children, factory workers, child laborers, and

human rights victims. It was her experiences in Haiti and other developing countries that Kolbe says motivated her to return to university to pursue an academic career. Kolbe's co-author in the study is Royce Hutson, a former doctoral fellow at the Madison, Wisconsin-based Institute for Research on Poverty and a current associate professor of social work at Wayne State University.

Kolbe says, "I felt that in academia I could have a greater impact on developing ideas and policies which would help promote justice and healing for human rights victims," explaining that advocating for social justice is an essential tenet of the National Association of Social Workers' code of ethics. When starting her studies in late 2004 Kolbe decided to go by her father's surname rather than the hyphenated name she had been using previously. That decision, she says, was to avoid persecution for her sexual orientation, as she had previously been the subject of media reports about discriminatory treatment of gay youth.

In response to Arthur's allegations of "bias", Kolbe replies, "I am in no way a Lavalas propagandist as Arthur implies. Just because I wrote about Haiti and do not believe Aristide was a dictator, that does not make me Fanmi Lavalas. That is ridiculous," she said. "This survey was conducted fairly and accurately. The researchers conducted themselves without bias and interviewed and gathered information from 1260 randomly selected homes. To insinuate that the report is misleading is to allege a grand conspiracy involving dozens of people including our university's ethics committee which had full knowledge of my past history in Haiti and had no problem with it when they approved our research protocols."

A Haitian resident of London, who wishes to remain anonymous due to the death threats, explains that on Sept. 2 Charles Arthur told her and several other people that "We need to find this woman's phone number so people can contact her and complain to her directly." The following day a flyer emblazoned with Kolbe's photo was released titled "Who is Athena Kolbe?" Respond to Fanmi Lavalas Propaganda!!!!" Another witness, wishing to go unnamed due to the fear of being targeted, explains that Arthur was responsible for distributing the fliers. The flyer's text is identical to portions of Arthur's letter to the Lancet, which he posted online. It ends by encouraging people to "ask her why she is hiding her affiliation with Fanmi Lavalas" and gives Kolbe's phone numbers, email address, home address, and the address and phone number of her family members.

The calls began the next day, Kolbe explains, as she received over a dozen. One caller with a "clearly Haitian accent" called her a "Lavalas chimere" saying, "Do you know what we do to Lavalas chimere? You deserve to die painfully. We know where you are. We know who you are." In a later call she was threatened with rape, evisceration and death, said a police official. The harassment is being investigated by the FBI who have given the Wayne State University researchers "several options" to find the callers, says Hutson.

On September 6, Kolbe received a dead rat in the mail. Postal investigators are investigating the source of the package, which was postmarked in Brooklyn, New York. Just days after Kolbe received the dead rat in her mail a frequent poster on the Internet forum Haitiforever.com, Michel Nau, a senior analyst at Georgetown University, commenting on the Lancet survey claimed it smelled "like a dead rat."

"Intimidation and violence against journalists and human rights investigators critical of the coup government is nothing new, as Kolbe's death threats are the most recent." explains Randall White editor of Haitiaction.net, which frequently covered assaults on the poor by security forces of the interim government. Radio WKAT reporter Abdias Jean was executed on January 12 2005, according to witnesses after photographing the summary execution of three young men by Interim government police. Later that year, in September, SWAT members of the Police Nationale d'Haiti (PNH) arrested American journalist Kevin Pina and a Haitian photojournalist working for AP Jean Ristil. Ristil was arrested again and subjected to torture later in 2005 on orders from Haiti's Central Headquarters of the Judicial Police.

The persecution of those who expose human rights abuses is to be expected, says Hutson who explains that the research team expected "our methodology and findings to be subjected to intense scrutiny because we examined patterns of violations by political actors who might not have wanted those violations to be exposed." But, he says, "the charges of bias are baseless. We were aware Athena had written under another name and found no conflict. Our concern is the way UN soldiers are interacting with Haitians." Lancet Publisher, Richard Horton, explains the study had excellent credential and peer reviews, stating in the UK's Guardian newspaper, "It was very thoroughly reviewed by four external advisers," he said.

Several other human rights studies, such as those by the Miami University of Law, the New York University School of Law, the National Lawyers Guild, and Amnesty International, found the interim government and paramilitary forces guilty of extra-judicial violence, reports that received little coverage in the press (Sprague, 2006). One of the few local Haitian human rights groups to focus on violence within Port-au-Prince's slum communities, the Association of University Graduates Motivated For A Haiti With Rights (AUMOHD), has reported frequently on violence against Lavalas communities.

Kolbe concludes, "Our type of study can not be used to prove that no violations happened by a particular group; it can only be used to show broader patterns of abuse against the populace. Human rights workers reported patterns of violations by political actors against people throughout Port-au-Prince during 2004 and 2005 and that's exactly what we found."

The Lancet study found that 21 percent of the killings were attributed to members of the interim government's Haitian National Police (HNP), 13 percent to the demobilized army and 13 percent to anti-Lavalas gangs such as Lame Timachet. Most of the rest of the violations were attributed to criminal elements. The study also found a high amount of sexual violence committed since Aristide's ouster, much of it committed by anti-Lavalas political actors. Although Kolbe points out that the study found a number of sexual threats and threats of physical violence were issued by UN troops and Lavalas supporters.

©2004 Pacific News Service

Charles Arthur's organization the Haiti Support Group acknowledges amongst its associates a number of organizations which failed to report on the interim government's wave of violence upon Haitian slum dwellers, such as the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHHD) which received funding from the Canadian quasi-governmental agency "Rights and Democracy", a partner with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Also affiliated with the Haiti Support Group, the Batay

Ouvriye (BO) who called for Aristide to "leave the country" is the recent recipient of \$450000 USD in NED and State Department programs through the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS). Camille Chalmers, head of the Haitian Advocacy Platform for Alternative Development (PAPDA) another group affiliated with the Haiti Support Group, lobbied for the resignation of Aristide and coauthored a letter labeling Aristide a "dictator" with another PAPDA official, Yves Andres Wainwright who later become environment Minister under the Latortue government. Chalmers then established close ties with the Canadian "Democracy Promotion" agency Alternatives, who works with the NED and receives 50% of its budget from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Christian Aid a financier of the Haiti Support Group receives significant funding from the British government as well as CIDA.

The controversial human rights activist Pierre Esperance and his organization National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) refused to go into poor neighborhoods after the coup, which they explained to a Quixote Center delegation in March 2004. Esperance at the time of Aristide's ouster was a treasurer of POHDH, while his other organization NCHR received \$100000 USD from CIDA, renewable every six months.

While The Lancet study was run on a small budget the aforementioned groups heavily funded and closely connected with Canadian, European, and U.S. government or quasi-government agencies have yet to subject their claims on human rights abuses in Haiti to similar peer-review. Charles Arthur did not respond to our requests for comments.

Joe Emesberger is a writer living in Canada with an interest in Haiti.

Jeb Sprague is a graduate student and freelance journalist.
Visit his blog at <http://www.freehaiti.net>

Haiti wants 15-year-old US arms embargo lifted

Sat Sep 16, 2006

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Reuters

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - Haiti's prime minister on Friday asked Washington to lift the 15-year-old arms embargo that bars the troubled Caribbean country from buying U.S. weapons for its ill-equipped police force.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said the ban was hurting Haiti's ability to ensure the safety of its 8 million people.

"How can the police be effective if they cannot get the weapons and armament they need to carry out their difficult mission?" Alexis told Reuters. "That's why we have asked the U.S. to lift the embargo."

The embargo was imposed in 1991 after the Haitian military overthrew the government of then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. It was aimed at preventing the Haitian army and thugs accused of gross human rights abuses from obtaining weapons from the U.S. market.

U.S. Ambassador to Haiti Janet Sanderson said the embargo is still in place, although in 2005 the United States authorized the Haitian government to conditionally buy a limited quantity of weapons.

But U.S. officials in Haiti have prevented the Haitian government from taking possession of those two shipments of weapons, which are piled up in a warehouse at the police academy in the Petion-Ville suburb of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The U.S. government wants Haitian authorities to first comply with conditions set by the U.S. Congress when the decision was made to allow the shipments to the violence-torn and impoverished country.

The weapons were required to remain under the embassy's care," Sanderson told Reuters. "And those who would be allowed use those weapons should be vetted."

Many members of the Haitian police force, including some who served in the Haitian military, have been accused of human rights violations.

One warehoused shipment was donated by the United States to the interim government that preceded the current administration. The second was purchased by Aristide during his second term as president, but shipping was delayed to 2005 because of the unrest that forced out Aristide in 2004.

Haitian and U.S. authorities also disagreed over the U.S. policy of deporting Haitians who have served prison time in the United States, which Haiti considers a threat to its national security because it lacks the means to control them.

Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis admitted as new members of NAM
People's Daily Online, China
September 18, 2006

The 14th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on Saturday formally admitted Haiti, and St Kitts and Nevis, as two new members, bringing the membership of NAM from 116 nations to 118.

Haiti is located in the Western Hemisphere while St. Kitts and Nevis is a small dual Caribbean island nation whose economy relays on tourism.

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said earlier in a speech "Their admission is indicative of the interest of the countries of the South to become integrated into and belong to this forum -- where, without a doubt, we share common values and interests and, in a united and friendly manner, defend our right to live and develop as independent nations."

NAM is made up of mostly developing countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Source: Xinhua

US to provide half-billion aid package to Haiti
The Dominican Today
September 18, 2006

Port-Au-Prince.— The United States announced a \$492 million aid package aimed at putting Haiti on a path to stability and lifting its stagnant economy.

The funds, to be disbursed over three years, will address the Caribbean nation's "enormous economic challenges" by creating jobs, increasing access to healthcare and education and fighting HIV/AIDS, said U.S. Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson.

"Haiti is special. It is starting with a very high unemployment rate. It is starting with a new democratic process that is extremely important and we are here to support all of that," Sanderson said in a news conference with Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis.

Current President René Préval took power in May and has pledged to restore order, but a surge in kidnappings and other violence blamed on street gangs has raised fears that the shaky stability could crumble again.

In a recent report, the World Bank included Haiti on a list of 26 "fragile states" at risk of collapsing because of conflict, poverty and bad governance. The report said international donors failed to help provide basic security in Haiti and had poorly timed aid disbursements.

Alexis said the assistance from the United States, Haiti's largest foreign donor, would help the government continue "efforts to have a functioning [democratic] system and good governance."

The aid package also will pay for initiatives to reform Haiti's justice system and boost agribusiness. It does not include funds to buy weapons for ill-equipped police forces in Haiti, which remains under a 15-year-old U.S. arms embargo.

United States donates 492M Dollars to Haiti
The Dominican Today
September 16, 2006

HAITI.- The American Government granted a donation to help the country in the development of social programs, the creation of services and the fight against the AIDS.

The donation will be effected progressively within the next the three years, according to the agreement signed by Haitian prime minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis; minister of Planning and External Cooperation, Jean Max Bellerive; the ambassador of the United States in Haiti, Janet Sanderson, and the director of the American Agency for Internacional Development (USAID), Paul Tuebner.

"This agreement aims at improving Haitians living conditions, their opportunities, development of quality social services and to reinforce Haitians rights in Haiti", commented Sanderson.

The diplomat emphasized that among the objectives in the agreement, is to help President René Préval, in matters of education and health; in the reform of the national police and the judicial system and in the fight against AIDS.

During the agreement's signature, Haiti's Prime Minister and the US Ambassador talked about the deported Haitian immigrants from American territory. "We are conscious that the deported Haitians from the USA constitute a great problem in Haiti and are a subject that we will continue discussing with the Haitian government", it pointed Sanderson.

Nevertheless, she indicated that "the deported Haitians responsibility is Haiti's own"

U.S. announces aid package to help stabilize Haiti
Associated Press
South Florida Sun Sentinel
September 15 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The United States on Friday announced a \$492 million U.S. aid package aimed at putting Haiti on a path to stability and lifting its stagnant economy.

The funds, to be disbursed over three years, would address the poor Caribbean nation's "enormous economic challenges" by creating jobs, increasing access to health care and education and fighting HIV/AIDS, said U.S. Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, is struggling to recover from a bloody 2004 rebel uprising that toppled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and pushed the country deeper into despair.

President Rene Preval took power in May and has pledged to restore order, but a surge in kidnappings and other violence blamed on street gangs has raised fears that the shaky stability could crumble again.

In a report released this week, the World Bank included Haiti in a list of 26 "fragile states" at risk of collapsing because of conflict, poverty and bad governance. The report said international donors failed to help provide basic security in Haiti and had poorly timed aid disbursements.

Haiti activists say solidarity needed
Author: Marilyn Bechtel
People's Weekly World Newspaper
09/14/06

BERKELEY, Calif. — A standing-room-only crowd packed St. Joseph the Worker Roman Catholic Church Sept. 9 as U.S. and Haitian activists called for continuing solidarity with the Haitian people's struggle for peace, justice and democracy. They also urged an end to Bush administration policies that led to the U.S. abduction of democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004 and the two-year regime of interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue.

A theme throughout the evening was the need for the United Nations to switch from military occupation to helping build the country's infrastructure.

Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a leader in Haiti's peace and justice movement and a former political prisoner under Latortue, was greeted with standing ovations both before and after his remarks. Emphasizing that he supports Haiti's new President Rene Preval, elected last February, Jean-Juste said Preval is "moving very slowly" to provide services to the poor, return unjustly fired people to their jobs, and secure President Aristide's return from exile. Noting that Preval "is apparently under big pressure from a sector in the international community," he added, "We have to keep the resistance movement in good shape so President Preval and his government can move in the direction we workers want him to follow."

Jean-Juste emphasized the importance of peaceful resistance, saying that though many nonviolent demonstrators were killed under the post-coup interim government, "we kept marching until our messages were heard far away."

He urged Americans to participate in the November elections: "The more you organize before Election Day, the more peaceful country you will get, and the more peace we can have in our region and around the world."

Pointing out that the United Nations' military mission, Minustah, hasn't ended violence, misery and hunger, Jean-Juste called on the UN to provide tractors and trucks to rebuild the country instead of tanks and weaponry.

In a brief conversation after the program, he said, "What we expect of international organizations is that they help us alleviate misery by assisting with infrastructure and helping people achieve a greater standard of living." Noting that Aristide's government provided people with food, shelter and other basic needs, he added, "The moment we have a government that will help the people, they get rid of it."

"No matter how hard we work in Haiti, it's nothing unless we make our country safe for democracy in Haiti," Brian Concannon, director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, told the crowd. Although Haiti's executive and legislative branches have made at least partial transitions with the election of Preval and the new Parliament, he said, "almost no transition" has occurred in the justice system, which was systematically stacked under Latortue.

Concannon, whose organization defends activists jailed for speaking out for democracy, urged pressure on the Haitian government, on Washington, and on “individual actors” in the justice system “to make sure they obey the rule of law.” He added, “We need to keep going until the democratic transition is absolutely complete.”

He highlighted the need for additional members of Congress to join the present 57 sponsors of H Res 888, introduced by U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Los Angeles), to relieve Haiti’s crushing debt burden.

Calling his work “pragmatic solidarity,” Dr. Paul Farmer, head of Partners in Health, also stressed the role of solidarity. “We’ll continue our efforts to serve large numbers of people living in poverty,” he said, “but it’s really people like this audience who will make the difference, because the problem is more in Washington than anywhere else.”

Farmer said Partners in Health, which operates eight facilities in central Haiti, anticipates over 2 million patient visits this year alone.

During the evening, great appreciation was expressed for the role of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including U.S. Reps. Maxine Waters and Barbara Lee, as well as for the work of the Haiti Action Committee — organizer of the event — in helping to build solidarity. Father Jean-Juste received certificates of appreciation from Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates and Barbara Lee.

**Congress Introduces HOPE Legislation
Chairman Thomas Introduces Trade Preferences Bill
House Ways and Means Committee
September 22, 2006**

Committee on Ways and Means
For Immediate Release Contact: Press Office
September 21, 2006 202-225-8933

WASHINGTON - Today, Rep. Bill Thomas (R-CA), Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, introduced H.R. 6142, a bill to provide trade preferences for developing countries. This legislation has three major components:

African Investment Incentive Act to provide investment incentives for U.S. companies in Africa and to extend modified third country fabric benefits.

Generalized System of Preferences extension for two years with modifications to assure preferences benefit countries in the most need.

Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE) to provide certain apparel benefits to Haiti.

"This legislation is aimed at continuing and targeting our bipartisan humanitarian efforts through trade," said Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA). "It will enhance opportunities for the world's poorest countries, while assuring no adverse impact to U.S. industries or workers." A summary of the legislation follows:

(more)

Committee on Ways and Means
Extension of Generalized System of Preferences,
Africa Investment Incentive Act, and
Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through
Partnership Encouragement ("HOPE") Act
H.R. 6142, Summary
Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)

Extends GSP for two years, consistent with the President's budget request.

2. Tightens rules on competitive need limit waivers to tailor the program for use by lesser developed countries that need help exporting to the United States:· Eliminates the opportunity for waivers on any product category when a country exports more than \$1.5 billion of that product in the prior year.1 Eliminates the opportunity for waivers for countries with per capita income more than \$3400..African Investment Incentive Act1. Provides a tax credit for new U.S. labor and capital investments in AGOA-eligible countries:

An elective credit is available to offset U.S. tax on income from active trade or business operations (other than mining, oil and gas) in AGOA-eligible countries. The credit is available to U.S. corporations that invest in AGOA-eligible countries directly (through "branch" operations) and indirectly (through controlled foreign corporations and partnerships).

The credit is equal to 60 percent of additional wages and fringe benefits and an amount (15 percent - 65 percent) of depreciation on new investments in tangible property (other than vessels, aircraft and related containers). Credit can be carried forward for 10 years. Credit (as well as any carryforward) expires for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2015.

Extends current provision allowing benefits for apparel made with fabric from third countries until September 2008, with a full 3.5 percent cap.

3. Starting in October 2008, replaces current third country fabric benefit with a new rule of origin for lesser developed countries for apparel products based upon the percentage of African content. The new rule would allow duty free access for apparel containing 50 percent or more African content (or U.S., U.S. free trade agreement, or Caribbean content). This 50 percent in the rule would grow to 60 percent in increments through year 2015 and be subject to a 3.5 percent cap.⁴ Provides an exception to the third country fabric benefit and to the benefit under the newly created rule of origin for apparel goods made from components that are in "abundant supply" in Africa. The purpose is to remove current disincentives for the investment in fabric production in Africa.

Specifically, the bill requires the International Trade Commission (ITC) to determine which products are being produced commercially in Africa and in what amount. After the ITC-determined level of African supply is used, then apparel companies in Africa may use the third country rule for additional demand. In particular, denim is deemed to be in abundant supply because of known production in Lesotho.

Allows duty free treatment for lesser developed countries for certain textiles (non-apparel) of wholly made African fabric.

Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement ("HOPE") Act

Applies the same political, economic, and labor criteria as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

2. Applies same textile and apparel transshipment requirements as AGOA.³ In addition to current CBI benefits, provides a new rule of origin for apparel:

50% of the value of the finished product must be of U.S., Haitian, NAFTA, AGOA, CBI, Andean, or FTA origin in years 1-3; in year 4, the percentage grows to 55% and in year 5, to 60%

Allows the new test to be applied on an annual, aggregated basis

Caps the amount of trade under the new test at 1% of U.S. apparel imports in year 1, growing by 0.25 percentage points per year through year 5

4. Allows a "single transformation" rule of origin for bras, so that components can be sourced from anywhere as long as they are assembled in Haiti.⁵ Provides a small tariff preference level (TPL) for woven apparel, of 50 million square meter equivalents (SMEs) in years 1 and 2 and 33.5 million SMEs in year 3.⁶ Requires a study by the International Trade Commission to determine the effect of the textile and apparel benefits on the trade markets and industries in Haiti, the Caribbean Basin countries, and the United States.⁷ Assures that short supply determinations can be revoked in the case of fraud.⁸ Liberalizes the rule of origin for wire harnesses, providing benefits if 50% of the value added is of U.S., Haitian, NAFTA, AGOA, CBI, Andean, or FTA origin.

Guatemala sends fourth batch of soldiers to UN peace-keeping mission in Haiti
People's Daily Online
September 18, 2006

Guatemala on Monday sent its fourth batch of soldiers to join the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, according to news from Guatemala City, capital of the Central American nation.

The 80 soldiers are expected to spend 18 months in Haiti, Guatemalan military sources told local media, adding that the group was made up of two senior officers, three translators, 12 junior officers, 21 support specialists and 42 military policemen.

Former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide went into exile in February 2004 amid threats of an armed rebellion after the opposition accused him of corruption and dictatorship.

After his fall, the United States, France and Canada sent troops to the country. The United Nations in June 2004 dispatched a peacekeeping force which groups some 6,000 troops and 1,000 civilian policemen to replace the mixed foreign force and restore Haiti's stability.

Source: Xinhua