

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: SEPTEMBER 26 – OCTOBER 5, 2005

OAS Official Says Main Challenge For Haiti Is Governance After Elections

By Carib News

Caribbean World Radio

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BASSETERRE, ST. KITTS - Assistant Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS) Ambassador Albert Ramdin said Tuesday while he is “cautiously optimistic” that Presidential Elections will be held in Haiti as scheduled for November 20 this year, the main challenge will be governing in an environment of peace and stability.

Speaking at a news conference late Tuesday following making courtesy calls on St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Dr. the Hon. Denzil L. Douglas and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. the Hon. Timothy Harris, Ambassador Ramdin said while there were concerns on security issues for many countries, “it has improved although it is not the best, but it is up to a certain level which is acceptable and will not jeopardize the elections in any form.”

“At this point, the conclusion is from the OAS, is that we are cautiously optimistic about the preparations for the elections. Out of the approximately four million eligible voters, 3.1 million have been registered and I think that is a good 70 percent of the electoral population,” said Ramdin, who is in Basseterre to attend the official opening of the 5th Caribbean Week in Agriculture at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort.

Ambassador Ramdin pointed out that all the political parties have had the opportunity to register their presidential candidates in a process seen as inclusive one that “was important to CARICOM.”

“The Party of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide had the opportunity to register both in terms of voter registration and in terms of nominating candidates for the Presidential Elections and I am sure also that in the upcoming local elections they will be able to present their candidate. That process has been inclusive and that is a positive step,” said Ramdin.

The senior OAS official said the Haiti’s Electoral Commission needs to be strengthened and the government in Port Au Prince is currently working towards this goal with the support of the OAS, the United Nations and the Caribbean Community.

“If we put that all together and there is the political will in Haiti and from the Interim Government to make the right decisions, we will be able to have an electoral calendar towards the 20th November and then hopefully, if that works out fine, on the 7th of February next year, there will be a constitutionally elected president with his own Cabinet,” said Ramdin.

But he said the main challenge is not really the holding of the elections. “That is only the first step. The main challenge will be to have democratic governability after the elections. That the government that is in place can govern in an environment of peace, stability and of opportunity. That is an area of focus that the international community is focusing on,” said Ramdin.

OAS to play major role in Haiti's elections
Wednesday October 05 2005
by Corliss Smithen
Sun St. Kitts and Nevis

The Organisation of American States (OAS) is playing a major role in maintaining political stability in Haiti.

Addressing media corps in Basseterre yesterday Assistant Secretary of the Organisation of American States (OAS), Ambassador Albert Ramdin said the OAS is cautiously optimistic about preparations for Haiti.

Haitians are expected to go to the polls this October and November to elect a new president to replace ousted leader Jean Bertrand Aristide last year.

Aristide was overthrown 29 Feb., and blames the US for organising his removal from office.

“We have noticed that all political parties had the opportunity to register. There was an inclusive process and the security environment has improved up to a certain level,” Ambassador Ramdin said.

Haiti has been experiencing political turbulence for some time as armed ex-soldiers and former rebels who helped overthrow Aristide still control parts of the country, and violence in pro-Aristide slums has killed more than 250 people since 30 Sept.

Ambassador Ramdin said the true test of Haiti’s democracy and stability begins after the elections.

“The OAS will be doing what it can to help maintain a stable political climate in Haiti. We’re hoping to create an environment of peace, of hope and of stability,” Ramdin said.

More than 6,000 local and regional posts will be contested on 9 Oct., while the election for Haiti’s president and 129 legislators will take place on 13 Nov.

About 91 political parties have already registered with the government with about 50 more expected to sign up. About 100 presidential candidates are expected to participate.

Canada, the US, Haiti and the United Nations are financing the elections with funds totaling US\$26.5 million. An additional US\$12 million will be provided by the European Union.

Brutality in Haiti
Talk scheduled for Oct. 11 at Marian College
Fran Quigley
Nuvo.net
October 5, 2005

Human rights lawyer Brian Concannon Jr. directs the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), www.ijdh.org, which litigates cases and documents human rights violations in Haiti. Several investigations, including some conducted by IJDH, have shown that violence and poverty have increased in Haiti under a U.S.-backed government that replaced ousted President Jean Bertrand-Aristide in early 2004. ("More Violent and More Inhuman," Feb. 2-9, 2005)

Human rights lawyer Brian Concannon Jr. will be speaking about Haiti on Oct. 11 at Marian College. Concannon lived and worked in Haiti from 1995 to 2004, first with the United Nations, and then with the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI) in Port-au-Prince. The BAI was established by the elected Haitian government to help victims and the justice system prosecute human rights cases.

Concannon will be speaking on Tuesday, Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. at Marian College's Allison Mansion. The talk is part of the Global Studies Speakers Series sponsored by Marian's Franciscan Center for Global Studies

NUVO: The title of your talk is "Haiti: the International Community's Dictatorship." President Aristide left Haiti in early 2004 and an unelected government has taken over, which follows the same pattern that occurred in 1991. What has been the international community's response the two times Aristide was removed from power?

Concannon: The role of the international community in the first coup was to express public disapproval and then to impose sanctions, which eventually had some effect. President Aristide was returned to his elected position and we were able to prosecute many of the human rights violations by people who carried out the coup. This time, however, the international community, especially the U.S., is openly giving assistance in guns and money to the killers.

NUVO: What should the U.S. be doing in Haiti?

Concannon: We should put our basic democratic principles in action. We should withhold all aid to the current Haitian government until they release the two dozen or more political prisoners being held right now. And we should demand that elections be conducted in a way that is consistent with a democratic process, and let the Haitian government know that the U.S. will not recognize a government elected in an undemocratic process.

NUVO: Presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for Nov. 20 in Haiti. Will those be fair elections?

Concannon: It is possible they will be fair elections, but there would first have to be drastic changes from the current situation.

There are two huge problems now: First, many of the people who would be the most popular candidates (including two high-profile supporters of ousted President Aristide: the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste and former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune) are in jail. Others are in exile or in hiding.

Second, there is an intentional effort to suppress the vote of poor people. The very poor Cite Soleil area of Port-au-Prince has 300,000 people but not even a single registration site. There are only 400 to 600 voter registration sites in all of Haiti. Compare that to the 4,000 sites in Los Angeles, which has about one-third the land area and much better transportation, or the 11,000 sites the democratically elected Haitian governments had in place. Haiti is a big place and the roads are bad, so the poor will have a difficult time voting.

NUVO: Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 8 of every 10 Haitians living in poverty. If and when democracy is restored, what can the democratically elected government do to reverse Haiti's slide into desperation?

Concannon: A new government could continue what the previous democratically elected government was already doing. More secondary schools were built in Haiti in the years after the return of democracy in 1994 than were built in the previous 200 years. Literacy, sanitation and health care programs were started, but the latest coup government has dismantled them. But recovery will be tough: In Haiti, problems can build on themselves. For example, there has never been enough money for education in the past, so now even if you can build new schools, there is a shortage of well-educated teachers to fill them.

NUVO: Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice visited Haiti and criticized the government for holding political prisoners and for the slow preparations for the November elections. Do Secretary Rice's comments provide you with any optimism about the U.S.' future involvement in Haiti?

Concannon: It is something that she at least raised the issue of the prisoners, which is better than ignoring it. But it is clear that it is only lip service. She was there to support [current Prime Minister Gerard] Latortue, who is presiding over a brutal war against Haiti's democracy movement. The true feelings of the Bush Administration were revealed in June, after the House of Representatives voted to cut off shipments of guns to Haiti until the unelected government's human rights record improved. In response, the State Department announced they would send another \$1.9 million worth of weapons to the Haitian government before the elections.

Bringing Dallas to Port-au-Prince

Texas-based candidate Dumarsais Siméus takes his US-style campaign home to Haiti.

By Danna Harman | Staff writer

The Christian Science Monitor

October 6, 2005 Edition

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI – He is the epitome of the American dream. Born in a two room shack with an aluminum roof in the Haitian countryside, Dumarsais Siméus, came to the US as a student, and, through hard work and smarts, built up a \$100 million food empire. He is today one of the wealthiest black businessmen in the US, and a pillar of his Texas community.

The American system and style suits Mr. Siméus.

And so, when he decided to go home to run for president of Haiti a few months ago, Siméus, 65, went for an American-style campaign complete with top-notch American consultants, focus groups, media strategies and the rest.

But here in Haiti, neither Siméus's "go-get-em," "can-do," "show me the money" attitude picked up during 40-odd years in corporate America, nor the hot shot consultants and their relentlessly upbeat press releases behind him, have turned out to be the assets he had hoped for.

Despite his consultants' best efforts, the interest in Siméus here has, so far, focused on the length of time he spent away - rather than what he learned while there.

Haiti's electoral council (the CEP) blocked Siméus from running last month on constitutional grounds. Article 135 of the Haitian Constitution states a presidential candidate must be a native-born Haitian, never have renounced Haitian nationality, and have resided in the country for five consecutive years before the election. Siméus, who has a US passport and who has lived and worked in Texas in recent years, insists he never renounced his Haitian citizenship, and always kept a residence in Haiti.

Rob Allyn, the Dallas-based GOP political strategist who leads Siméus's election team, says the current government and "insiders" around it are out to get their candidate.

"They don't want someone in office who truly signifies change," says Mr. Allyn, over lunch in Port-au-Prince. "They want to hand-pick the candidates so they end up with someone who won't threaten the status quo here."

Perhaps, Siméus suggests, interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue "is afraid of clean government."

"There is one [candidate] who arrived in Haiti with a US passport ... and signed a sheet saying he was a US citizen. And anyone can understand that he's not allowed to take part in the elections," explained Mr. Latortue last week. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pointedly suggested, at the same press conference, that "any candidate who wants to participate in the elections," should be allowed to do so.

Twenty-three other candidates, besides Siméus, have also been rejected by the CEP, each on different grounds. There are currently 32 candidates running in the elections, scheduled for Nov. 20 but expected to be delayed.

He is challenging his rejection by the CEP, and plans to take his case all the way to the Supreme Court. His consultants - or team "Natif Natal" ('Native Son' in Creole) as they call themselves - are filing legal summonses, sending out press releases, and even drumming up an e-mail campaign.

"If you believe it is time for a change in Haiti ... now is the time for action!" reads the mass mailing, giving e-mail addresses of members of the electoral council and government, and urging supporters to write in and demand Siméus be added to the ballot.

But some wonder whether such trusted US campaign tactics suit the country they are being employed in. "Lately, we have had a lot of down days for the Internet," Latortue's spokesman Jean-Junior Joseph says, describing a normal occurrence in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. That might explain why he had not seen any of the Siméus campaign e-mails supposedly directed at his boss. "What works in Texas does not always fly here," he says.

Allyn, who has worked on campaigns in countries ranging from the Bahamas to Indonesia, disagrees. "It's an art form," he says of political campaigning - which can be tweaked for different countries, but nonetheless applies everywhere. "A key to our business is listening to and understanding the local market," he says. "And then using tested methods."

US political consultants have, over the past decade, taken this art and fanned out around the globe. Dick Morris, one of Bill Clinton's advisers, was a consultant to Viktor Yushchenko and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine last year. An earlier Clinton team - Stan Greenberg, Bob Shrum, and James Carville - parked themselves in Israel for a couple of months in 1999 and helped Ehud Barak unseat Bibi Netanyahu, who in turn was being advised by Arthur Finkelstein, a well-known Republican consultant.

More recently, in 2005, a horde of John Kerry's advisers from the 2004 election in the US decamped to the UK to work on Tony Blair's campaign for a third term.

"It's not that we invented this," says Mr. Allyn. "It's just that we figured it out first.... It's like Hollywood and the movies." America has more elections than any other country and spends more money on those contests for votes, he explains. And, as a result, it has a larger, more wily cadre of professional campaign consultants.

"My international experience should be a cause for celebration," argues Siméus, giving an evening interview in shorts and a T-shirt on the terrace of his hotel suite where he has been living since August. "Haitians should all be saying, 'this candidate is better for his pluralistic viewpoint, we need a man of his background to break the cycle of bad models we have had before....to fight the corruption and cronyism of the past, and to bring in investment, know how, innovation and reform.'"

But that is not what they are all saying.

"A law is a law and the constitution says he can't run," says human rights advocate Jean-Claude Bajoux.

While it is true Haiti does not always manage to keep to its laws, he continues, "...it does not befit a candidate - no matter how excellent - to begin his campaign asking for laws to be broken for him."

Siméus tries to downplay the importance of his American consultants. Instead, he talks of team building, transparency, and job creation. He waxes poetic about fiscal reform, microcredit, and revamping of government institutions. He has a plan for earning credibility on the international market, floating bonds, privatization and starting investment funds for entrepreneurs. And, he promises to stay "involved and on site," even if he is not allowed to run, or is able to run and loses.

When Allyn first met Siméus, the consultant told the aspiring politician he could get him elected but worried about what would come next. "Haiti is so troubled. There is so much to do there," Allyn told him. "Where are you going to start?" To which Siméus responded: "Don't worry, you can leave that to me. All I need you to do is get me there."

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Would-be candidates of Aristide's party watch from behind bars

As Haiti moves toward elections, one of the most charismatic figures is off the electoral rolls: Gérard Jean-Juste, a staunch supporter of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and a well-known Haitian rights activist in Miami who returned home in 1991 to minister to the poor.

His many followers pushed him recently to become a candidate for Aristide's Lavalas Family party - but the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) has blocked him, on grounds he needed to be physically present to register for the ballot.

This is an impossibility - as Mr. Jean-Juste is in jail, accused of ordering the kidnapping and brutal killing of prominent Haitian journalist and outspoken Aristide critic Jacques Roche.

The priest insists he was in Miami at the time of the killing and that he and other Lavalas members are being persecuted for political reasons by the interim government and others. The government dismisses the notion, but many others are skeptical. Amnesty International has called Jean-Juste a prisoner of conscience and 29 US congress members have sent letters to the US and Haitian governments demanding his release.

Even Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, visiting Haiti last week, mentioned the priest, and called on the courts to "accelerate justice on high profile cases."

She spoke also of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, another Aristide ally, who has been in jail - the same one as Jean-Juste - for 16 months without trial. "Justice has to come in a timely fashion," she

said at a press conference. "I told the Prime Minister that it should not be the case that anyone interpret any political motive here."

"The president and prime minister are behind my arrest and troubles. They are scared of the will of people," explains Jean-Juste. "I hear the people calling for me," he says in an interview from his small two-story prison, "but there is nothing I can do.... We try to meet and they attack us. They bar us from talking on radio and TV. They forbid us from having demonstrations."

The "political establishment" he says, does not really want Lavalas to participate in the elections at all. "But they are stuck - because they know our strength, and need us in the process to give their elections legitimacy."

After Jean-Juste's candidacy was rejected last month, the Lavalas party threatened to boycott the elections altogether, but finally ended up fracturing and fronting two candidates - former Lavalas senator Gérald Gilles (whose candidacy was later also rejected by the CEP, which deemed his registration papers were incomplete) and former Prime Minister Marc Louis Bazin, who is actually from another party that only recently allied itself with Lavalas. He is not accepted by many of Lavalas' more radical members.

"But this is not our real representation," says Annette Auguste, a popular singer and grassroots Lavalas agitator known as Só Ann, who is spending her days in a prison up the mountain from the prison where Jean-Juste and Neptune are being held.

Arrested on Mother's Day 2004, Ms. Auguste is accused of stockpiling weapons and using voodoo against Aristide critics, but, like Jean-Juste and Neptune, has not been formally charged.

"The jails are filled with Lavalas Family," she says, running her fingers through her cropped, graying hair. "They are scared of us and trying to break us." This country is filled with magui, she says, using the Creole word for monkey business. "We have no faith in these elections at all."

Alleged human smugglers may face lengthy jail terms
St. Maarten News
October 5, 2005

PHILIPSBURG--Two Haitian men may be facing prison sentences ranging from nine to twelve years on charges of manslaughter and human smuggling.

During yesterday's criminal session at the Court of First Instance the Prosecutor contended that both suspects were involved in transporting a group of 48 people from St. Maarten to St. Thomas on April 2. Due to inclement weather the vessel ran into trouble off the coast of St. Eustatius and two passengers died.

Prosecutor Paul Mooij told the court during the hearing that lasted more than three hours that the vessel L'Eternel Est Grand was designed for fishing operations and equipped to carry only five passengers. "There were just four life vests on board, while there were more than 40 passengers on board," he said.

The boat left St. Maarten from Mullet Bay on April 1 at 8:00pm. According to the man J.P. (36), alleged to be the captain of the boat, the organiser of the trip, a resident of Dominica named Felix, told him to take his passengers to the border of the territorial waters of the Netherlands Antilles near St. Eustatius, where the illegal immigrants – 40 Haitians, four Chinese, two Dominicans, and one resident of Guadeloupe – would transfer to another boat that would take them to St. Thomas.

Each passenger paid between US \$800 and US \$1,000 for the trip.

Due to bad weather and the fact that it was overloaded with passengers, the boat ran into trouble off the coast of St. Eustatius near Venus Bay.

What actually transpired that night remained sketchy during Tuesday's court hearing presided over by Judge Frank Wieland. It could be that some of the passengers panicked when the engine stopped because the boat had "made water" (taken on water) as a result of the rough seas. Several witnesses told the police some of the passengers had panicked and, thinking they were lost, jumped overboard in an attempt to reach the safe shores of St. Eustatius.

However, other witnesses stated that the deckhand J.L. (42), also referred to as Theo L., had acted in a very brutal manner, urging passengers to jump overboard. He even pushed some passengers off the boat and into the sea, these witnesses said.

When the police helicopter arrived on the scene eight persons were found in the waters off Venus Bay. The body of a drowned man was found washed up on the rocks on April 3. Another body was found two days later.

Mooij dropped the charge that J.L. had taken part in the forging of documents, but maintained that the other suspect J.P. had forged the documents of L'Eternel Est Grand by having the ship registered in St. Maarten under the name of another person. He had done so because, as an illegal resident of St. Maarten J.L., could not have his ship registered under his own name.

Mooij considered both suspects guilty of the primary counts of manslaughter and human smuggling. “They took 48 persons, among them some young children, on board a boat that is not allowed to leave the territorial waters. There was no safety equipment on board, even though some passengers couldn’t swim,” Mooij said.

Both suspects denied they had anything to do with the charges brought against them, but Mooij, contending that they were fully accountable, demanded prison sentences of nine years for J.L. and 12 years for Captain J.P.

In defence of his client J.L., attorney Jairo Bloem stated that no concise image of what had happened could be distilled from the statements given by the witnesses. His conclusion was that his client could not be convicted of manslaughter, but only of the lesser charge of death through negligence because the necessary safety precautions had not been taken.

Bloem further explained at great length that his client was not the organiser of the enterprise.

In addressing Judge Wieland J.P.’s lawyer Katja Heijntink maintained that there was no connection between the passengers on board L’Eternel Est Grand and the two dead persons that were found later. “This case is being built on guesswork and coincidence,” she said. “There is no indication that these men died through the actions of my client.”

She contended further that transporting people within the waters of the Netherlands Antilles was not a crime. Her client failed in the attempt to smuggle humans, she said. “Both suspects failed miserably in what they set out to do.” Bearing in mind that attempted human smuggling was not being charged, her client should be acquitted, Heijntink stated.

Judge Wieland allowed himself some time to think and announced he would hand down his ruling on Tuesday, October 19, at 9:00am.

Dealing misery and death from the back of the tiger in Haiti (new photos)

By Les Blough, Editor

Axis of Logic

Oct 5, 2005

Shown in the photograph (right) are members of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Lavalas family, slain by U.S.-backed police. On February 29, 2004, U.S. Marines kidnapped democratically-elected President Aristide and backed the coup that overthrew his government. In the first two months, those who brought the coup killed over 1,000 political adversaries and dissidents and the killing has gone on since, unabated. But this is nothing new to Haitians. Haitian soil has been bathed in blood as the result of foreign intervention and occupation for hundreds of years. The bleeding is a testament to their refusal to be enslaved.

The Political Prisoners

According to the attached Fault Lines report, there are over 1,000 political prisoners in Haiti. Among them, members of President Aristide's administration continue to languish in prison in Port-au-Prince. After the 2004 coup, a friend of mine went with a delegation of 12 to Haiti where they visited Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, of President Aristide's administration in prison. He described Neptune and other respected Haitian leaders suffering in the filthy prison, forced to eat swill passed to them through prison bars. Neptune himself is currently in need of blood and other medical tests and lacks any confidence in authorities to ensure his safety in the prison.

Why Haiti?

The only conceivable "strategic interest" the U.S. government could possibly have in Haiti lies in the fear of the captor. The Haitian Revolution was the first and only time that an enslaved people rose up, broke their chains, and established a new state. Haiti inspired enslaved African Americans in the United States and continues to be perceived as a threat to those who have institutionalized racism in the U.S.. Haiti represents the power of people to bring down unjust economies and racist governments.

Haiti's history - distant and recent - sends perpetual waves of fear into the heart of North American society. The same fear was exposed during the Civil Right's Movement in the early '60s. The white corporate media has attempted to co-opt the civil right's movement in the United States with sentimental acknowledgements to people like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King - now that they are gone and no longer pose a threat to the white establishment. But just as they fear Haitian leaders today, they also fear black leaders rising up again in the United States. African American leaders like King, Malcolm X and others were so hated and feared by the white establishment, the government had to resort to it's last refuge: decapitation.

Lest anyone reply that my use of the term "decapitation" are loose words from an old hippie, I must claim my authority for such a statement. I personally knew James Earl Ray and spent many hours with him while working in the Tennessee State Prison in Nashville. I spoke with him for hours "on the rock" in A-Block and transported him during the wee hours of the morning to and from his hearing for a new trial in Memphis. I also transported him to his last home at the Brushy Mountain Prison in East Tennessee. I knew the man and I know that it would have been impossible for this simple and ignorant

product of white poverty to pull off the complexities of the Martin Luther King assassination. No, the white establishment may have glossed over their racism with slick news media and Hollywood movies, but the fear and hatred for African Americans remain among the power elite in the U.S. just as they are exhibited today in Haiti. The foreward to the book, *Haiti: The Slave Revolution* states:

"Haiti was a beacon of hope and inspiration to the enslaved Africans of the United States. Haiti's history has been turbulent, but not for the reasons given by mainstream historians. Racism underlies their charges that the first black republic lacks "democratic traditions" and is prone to violence.

The people of Haiti are resolute

Despite the enormous power differential, the noble people of Haiti continue their struggle against the U.S. occupation and oppression of their country today. At this time in history, only the Palestinians can be compared to these people who persevere in their fight against a mighty oppressor from the dust of abject poverty - and with so little help from outside their country.

The U.S.-Backed Regime

The United States government continues to occupy Haiti, imprisoning, torturing and killing their people through their puppet regime, currently led by "Interim Prime Minister", Gerard Latortue. Below, Condoleezza Rice is shown meeting at the Presidential Palace in Port-au-Prince with Latortue on September 27, "to show support" for U.S.-controlled presidential elections set for November 20.

Latortue was appointed to his current position while living in the United States. His administration has been denied recognition by a number of foreign governments, particularly in the Caribbean and the African Union. International human rights groups have been steadfast in their opposition to his regime. The people of Haiti and President Aristide's political party, Fanmi Lavalas, in some cases from their prison cells, continue to fight back. This entire sherdade is being masked by what the corporate media is calling "the United Nations Stabilization Mission" - fabricated to ensure continued U.S. occupation and control. In *Lavalas Crackdown Continues, U.S. Journalist Arrested* (below), an Indymedia- Fault Lines writer describes the September 9 arrest of a U.S. filmmaker and Haitian journalist by Latortue's police.

When the people of Haiti finally throw off their chains for the last time all enslaved people will see that sovereignty and independence are possible.

It is difficult to dismount the tiger.

Find ways you can help support the people of Haiti through local and national protests against those who occupy their country and imprison their leaders.

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Haitian election serves the interests of foreign powers

October 4th, 2005

Devin Stone, regular columnist

Collegiate Times

Virginia Tech University, Virginia

Thursday, Sept. 29 was the 14th anniversary of the first overthrow of the democratically elected Aristide in Haiti by thugs on the Central Intelligence Agency payroll. For the next three years, an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 Haitians would die at the hands of the Front for Advancement and Progress in Haiti (FRAPH) which was a CIA sponsored death squad.

After this dark period in American foreign policy, we still have failed to learn from our mistakes. On Feb. 29, 2004, many of the same brutal thugs who overthrew Aristide originally overthrew him a second time.

The United States, France and Canada all play a hand in the current situation. Denying approved loans and aid to Haiti would destabilize this country, which was already in desperate poverty; meanwhile these three foreign governments would continue to fund opposition movements.

Last week, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discussed the need for a “new start,” where “elections can be a very important and precious step along the road to democracy,” for voting can be a “powerful weapon.” Rice is very much correct. If the electorate voted in an influential leader such as Fanmi Lavalas (Aristide’s political party) it would be an embarrassment to the United States. But the United States has never been good at losing, and ironically, the election could easily be a “powerful weapon” against the people of Haiti.

Most of the high ranking positions in the Haitian National Police (HNP), including almost all municipal chiefs, are held by former Forces Armées d’Haïti (FADH) soldiers like Guy Philippe who led the armed insurgency against Aristide in 2004. FADH was disbanded after 1994 because of its involvement in coups and brutalizing citizens, and now the HNP is doing the same. According to a human rights investigation from the University of Miami, summary executions by the police are “routine,” and in order to be promoted, one has to be involved in “dirty work,” and officers are under immense pressure to kill suspects so as to avoid the corrupt judicial system. Ever since Aristide’s overthrow, massacres have become a big problem in Haiti.

On July 6, U.N. troops stormed Cite Soleil in a massacre that residents and doctors claim killed at least 20 civilians. The United Nations claims that it was trying to crack down on gang violence, but residents tell a different story, saying that they are being killed for demanding that Aristide return to Haiti. The response of the United States has been to send more weapons to Haiti, even though Amnesty International has warned of the need to cut down on arms proliferation in Haiti. Under the HNP’s strategy of cracking down on gang violence, the police have been distributing weapons to civilians as well, as seen in mid-August when the police handed out machetes to residents of Bel-Air. On Aug. 20, during a soccer match, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development and the interim government, hooded policemen and civilians armed with machetes and guns massacred at least 20 civilians who they considered “bandits.”

Violence has slowed the ability to register voters. Since most of the violence has been directed at communities where Aristide has the highest popularity, Lavalas supporters have been the slowest to become registered. Also of interest, the candidate whom the Lavalas party wants to run for president is still in jail. Since he is in prison, Father Gerard Jean-Juste cannot register in person for the election. Many in Haiti see this as unconstitutional; Louis Gerard Gilles said, "nothing in the constitution requires he should be present in person" to register his candidacy. Under the constitution, all Jean-Juste needs is two lawyers and a justice of the peace to present his candidacy, which he has done, but his actions have been rejected by Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council. When hundreds of supporters tried to protest the electoral council for refusing to register Jean-Juste, the United Nations and HNP stopped the protestors.

And thus we now have what Rice considers a "powerful weapon."

The interim government has banned large protests on Sept. 30, because the government cannot guarantee the safety of protestors. Without the right to protest, or the right to vote for one of the most popular political candidates, the ability of Haitians to express their political will is being marginalized.

Many have argued that the current U.S.-backed interim government has no legitimacy, for it came to power through force. An elected government will replace this government. As seen by those who have protested demanding Aristide returns to power, he still has strong popular support. With Aristide in exile, and one of the most important political candidates in jail, it is reasonable to conclude that the "powerful weapon" is simply a watered-down democracy, designed to fit the self-interest of foreign powers. With these two men out of the political process, and violence against their supporters as a continuing problem, it's questionable if the election will represent the democratic interests of the people in Haiti.

WEST PARK | GOOD SAMARITANS FOR A BETTER LIFE
Twins bring needy children from Haiti to Fla. for medical care
BY JANETTE NEUWAHL
Miami Herald
Oct. 2, 2005

She is known simply as "Miss Gina" in her native Haiti, where children point at her and shout, "God Bless America!"

But West Park resident Gina Eugene, 50, and her identical twin, Ginette, have come to represent more than a friendly face in Haiti. They are symbols of hope for the dying.

The twins helped Maniolita Auguste believe that her 6-year-old daughter, Christelle, whom doctors in Haiti said would surely die, will live on to have her own children.

They gave a new sense of purpose to Maleine Antoine, whose daughter, Marlie, 13, tried to kill herself rather than live with a balloon-size growth that puffs out beneath her swollen eyes, covering her face.

They've helped a boy named Marc Arthur Charles, 16, get the surgery he needed to regain use of his left arm, which was fused onto his chest in a fire that destroyed his family's home in Port-au-Paix.

And two weeks ago -- four years after they started bringing some of Haiti's most needy children to the United States for life-or-death treatment -- the Eugene sisters' fledgling nonprofit, Good Samaritans for a Better Life, reached a high point.

They were able to raise money for 17 plane tickets for 10 children and seven of their parents, the largest group ever that the sisters have brought here for medical help.

"I can't sleep near my cellphone anymore," said Ginette Eugene, explaining that Haitians who need emergency healthcare never stop calling.

One recent sign of their success came when doctors removed an eggplant-size tumor from the face of Dahana David, 15, several months ago. The girl, once so ashamed of her appearance that Gina found her hiding beneath a table, now smiles constantly.

On her most recent trip to Haiti, Gina displayed photos of Dahana taken before and after her surgery, shocking Haitians into an awareness of the healthcare available here.

Gina spent six weeks visiting churches and television and radio stations, collecting donations by describing how lives are saved through proper medical treatment.

She has become known for her trademark farewell: singing God Bless America at the conclusion of a radio or TV appearance.

Although the Eugene sisters are thrilled that they were able to bring such a large group here, they face another challenge -- raising enough funds for all the medical procedures.

They jump-start treatment by linking their young patients with the International Kids Fund at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami.

An offshoot of the Jackson Memorial Foundation, the IKF raises money for children in countries without the means to treat serious medical conditions, said Josephine Mora, community outreach manager for IKF.

The IKF connects the Haitian children with specialized doctors, raises money for individual cases, and is able to negotiate lower surgery rates.

Since its inception, the charity has treated 200 children from 22 countries. But the most desperate cases come from Haiti, Mora said.

Dr. Jesus Gomez, who performed Dahana's surgery, agreed.

"I'm just trying to give them the chance to come back and smile again," Gomez said. "God gave me these hands so that I can help these kids. It's my moral obligation."

Gomez estimated it will cost \$60,000 to remove the fibrous dysplasia from Marlie Antoine's face and treat her through recovery. Mora estimated it will cost at least \$15,000 for each heart surgery.

"Healthcare is nonexistent in Haiti," Ginette said mournfully. "We can't carry the entire burden of the country, but to those who reach out to us, we take care of them and leave the rest to God."

Region's ethnic communities blend in but remain connected
Immigrants retain culture without living in enclaves
By JULIA GLICK
Bradenton Herald Tribune

BRADENTON -- Usha Trivedi uses the Florida sun and soil to cultivate traditions from her Indian homeland and to connect with her countrymen here.

She grows curry leaves and bitter melons in her Bradenton back yard to share with Indian friends and to cook native dishes.

More immigrants like Trivedi are bypassing the Chinatowns and the barrios of big cities and settling in the suburban sprawl of Southwest Florida. Dispersed among apartment complexes and far-flung subdivisions, small immigrant groups find creative ways to unite and keep traditions alive.

Vietnamese, Brazilians, Ukrainians, Thais, Chinese, Indians, Haitians and other groups gather together and then scatter to their homes and jobs, living mostly unseen in suburbia.

"You just get in your car and drive around and you don't see anyone," said Sara Hernández, a sociology professor at New College. "But they are there."

While Mexican immigrants often live close together and are very visible to outsiders, smaller ethnic communities mostly live apart and unnoticed.

Spread out across the region, these immigrants connect like constellations of flickering lights.

They congregate around a few small churches, shops and restaurants -- unexpected dashes of spice that pepper the region's bland strip malls.

Although their numbers grew exponentially in the 1990s, the groups remain tiny blips in the census.

Yet the right event or festival can draw hundreds of countrymen seemingly out of nowhere.

Radio, the Internet, special phone directories and old-fashioned word of mouth help people forge communities over distance and recreate the comforts of home.

From Bombay to Bradenton

The scent of cumin and masala wafts through the India Bazaar, which sits between a chiropractor's office and a Methodist thrift shop on 26th Street West.

Trivedi and her husband, Mukesh, run the only Indian grocery store in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

"The community here is close, but we live very spread out," Usha said. "So we have to plan to meet up. It is hard."

The Asian population in the Sarasota-Bradenton area almost tripled in the '90s, outpacing blacks, whites and Hispanics, according the 2000 U.S. Census. Indians led the growth, going from fewer than 400 in 1990 to almost 1,200 in 2000. Their population continues to grow.

Indians are still only about one-fifth of 1 percent of the region's total population, and finding other Indians takes effort.

Business at the India Bazaar is slow during the week, when many Indians work 12-hour days, but the small store fills up on the weekends.

When newly arrived Indians drift into the store -- and sooner or later they all do -- the Trivedis get their phone numbers and addresses to share with the Indian-American Association of Manatee and Sarasota. The association adds the new people to a now 50-page directory of Indian families, professionals and cultural groups. The booklet gets fatter each year.

The Trivedi family left Bombay for Bradenton in 1999. They heard from family members already here that jobs were plentiful. Husband and wife worked two jobs each -- bottling beverages, bagging groceries, manning counters -- until they could buy the India Bazaar.

Now, they work seven days a week. But their little store serves as a focal point in the Indian community, taking the edge off the long hours.

"In India, you can work hard, but you have family and friends everywhere so you don't feel it," Trivedi said. "Here you feel the hard work more."

Most Indians here work as doctors, lawyers, professionals and business owners, said Mona Jain of the Indian-American Association.

Indians have formed clubs, held picnics and rented halls to celebrate holidays together. Children go to a different home each Sunday to learn the Hindi language and traditional dances.

"Indian people are always looking for one another," said Mukesh Trivedi. "We are trying to organize and bring people together."

Radio Haiti

Like the Trivedis, Louibert Delva has become an informal link for his countrymen scattered throughout the area.

Delva broadcasts Creole music and news to Haitian radio listeners every Sunday on 1420 AM. He serenades them with gospel and native "compas" music as they return from church, cook plantains and play dominoes at friends' homes.

Haitians work long hours here, often two jobs, with only Sunday off. So it is a day of relaxation, and friends and family seek one another out.

Several Haitian Baptist churches, most in Bradenton and Palmetto, bring people together to pray above Haitian drum rhythms.

Delva helps promote weekend church parties and concerts that often draw hundreds from the growing community.

The number of Afro-Caribbeans in the two counties doubled during the 1990s to almost 2,000, the 2000 census reported. But many Haitians went uncounted. There may be as many as 7,000 Haitians in the larger Tampa Bay area, Delva estimates.

They often blend into the black districts where they tend to live, he added. People do not immediately recognize them as Haitians.

Delva, a dark-skinned man with a gentle, sonorous voice, said most people mistake him for black on sight, Jamaican or West Indian when he speaks.

Jean Civil, a boat builder who came from Haiti in 1991, lives in Oneco, an area near State Road 70 and 53rd Avenue East in Manatee County that includes Mexicans and blacks.

He listens to Haitian radio on Sundays and goes to parties and events. There is no Haitian directory or Web site, but word of mouth is a great unifier.

"Someone has a birthday party or something. Then someone tells someone, they tell a friend, they tell a friend," he said. "Then everyone shows up. That's how we get together."

There aren't any Haitian stores in Manatee or Sarasota county. People improvise home cooking with Asian rice, Goya beans and supermarket spices. Some caravan to Orlando or Miami for better pickings.

When someone goes, people will find him, and his shopping list will grow.

"When you live in Miami, it is just like you live in Haiti," Civil said. "But here it is so hard to find Haitian things."

Only one Haitian restaurant, Josea's on 15th Street East in Oneco, cooks for the community, and everyone goes there.

When Delva has a free moment, he sits at a table underneath the red, white and blue of the Haitian and American flags hanging side by side in the window.

The restaurant gets crowded on Sundays, drawing Haitians from Palmetto, east Bradenton and other areas far from the Oneco strip mall.

Into the mix

While mainstream America has embraced the concept of multiculturalism, the scattered groups still cope with the pressure to conform and give up their traditions and language, said Hernández, the sociologist.

Community activities become essential for preserving culture: keeping the Creole language alive, for example, or ensuring that children still know dances for Indian festivals.

Ukrainians in North Port pray at a gold-domed church amid the pastel homes of South Biscayne Drive. They held their first Ukrainian art show this spring

Young Brazilians train in capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art, practicing at night in an apartment complex tennis court in.

British residents in Lakewood Ranch maintain a Web site for newcomers, cataloging mince pie recipes and informing Brits about where to find English hairdressers here.

But while immigrants adapt to their suburban home, the new cultures are also changing Southwest Florida.

More and more non-Indians come to the India Bazaar and ask Usha Trivedi for advice on preparing curries and chutneys.

Jean Civil, the boat builder, does his shopping in a small Thai grocery store around the corner. He discovered he can use the coconut milk and rice to make Haitian food.

Trivedi knows young Indians who have intermarried with Latinos, raising their children to speak Hindi and Spanish.

Adapting to a different culture does not necessarily mean you assimilate and lose what you have, Hernández said.

"It is not just society becoming multicultural," she said. "People become multicultural, and then you can move and switch between the worlds."

Wyclef Jean's Life Makes TV Comedy Show

Posted by Dave

Rap News Network Staff

10/5/2005

Wyclef Jean, once a member of the Grammy-winning hip-hop/rap group, The Fugees, has landed a deal with HBO to produce and star in a comedy series based on his life.

The Hollywood Reporter has let it be known that the project is currently in the very early stages of development and will be cowritten by Jean and writers Seth Rosenfield and Danny Hoch. Jean has also been involved in writing and producing an original music for the series through his Platinum Sound Recording Studios.

Born in Haiti, the son of Minister, John was born in Croix-des-Bouquets. By the age of nine his family had moved to the Marlborough projects in Brooklyn New York. In his teenage years, he had moved to New Jersey, became interested in the guitar, and studied jazz through his high school's music department.

In 1987 Jean's cousin Prakazrel Michel (aka Pras) and his cousin's high school classmate Lauryn Hill formed a hip hop group labeled the Tranzlator Crew which later turned into the Fugees. The three group members then signed to Ruffhouse Records 1993 and released their debut album, Blunted on Reality. The groups sophomore album had a number of very popular hits including "Killing Me Softly" and "Fu-Gee-La". The album was the tremendous phenomenon in the charts selling over 6 million copies.

The Fugees then fell silent from 1996 to the present. They have been reunited with several public performances and are laying down groundwork for a follow-up album expected early 2006. They are also scheduled to launch their European tour in Vienna on November 30.

Jean kept very busy while the Fugees were taking their hiatus. In this time he released three solo albums including why clef Jean presents the carnival in 1997, the eclectic, and masquerade in 2002. It is also work with major producers and songwriters for artists such as Destiny's Child, Mick Jagger, Whitney Houston, Carlos Santana and the Black Eyed Peas. A Golden Globe nomination was earned last year for the song "A Million Voices" featured in the film "Hotel Rwanda."

Jean's acting résumé is currently in the works appearing in episodes of the NBC drama third watch this year. He has been featured in a number of independent projects which are set to debut at AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival next month.

**This Week in Haiti:
Haiti Progres Weekly
As Hundreds of Thousands Denounce Iraq War and Haiti Occupation:
International Tribunal on Haiti Holds Opening Session
by Greg Dunkel
September 28, 2005**

Even Haitians, who knew about the story, were shocked and horrified when watching the video of Fredi Romélus, as he sat besides the bodies lying in a pool of blood in his home in the sprawling Port-au-Prince slum of Cité Soleil. He described how his 22-year old wife Sonia Romélus and their sons, Stanley and Nelson, were killed by UN occupation troops.

“They surrounded our house this morning and I ran out thinking my wife and the children were behind me,” he said. “They couldn't get out and the ‘blan’ [UN] fired into the house.”

Sonia was holding Nelson, 1, when the attack began. The bullet that passed through her killed him too. U.N. troops then killed Stanley, 4, with a shot to the head. A U.N. spokesman said that U.N. troops only shot “bandits” who fired on them first.

This video testimony, filmed just hours after U.N. troops gunned down some 60 people in Cité Soleil on July 6, 2005, was part of the evidence put on the record at the opening session of the International Tribunal on Haiti, held in Washington, September 23, 2005. Other sessions are being planned for cities like Miami, New York, Montreal, and Boston, where there are large Haitian communities.

In opening the session, presiding judge Ben Dupuy explained that the Tribunal has two main purposes. “First, it will investigate reports of human rights violations in Haiti, with particular attention to individual responsibility, for those violations under international law,” he said. “To this end the tribunal will examine current reports of killing, torture, illegal detention and other serious violations of international human rights, as well as the events leading up to the overthrow of Haiti’s elected government in February 2004. The International Tribunal for Haiti’s second purpose is to develop a case file that will be referred to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court [ICC] in the Hague.”

The United States does not recognize the jurisdiction of the ICC, but the countries whose forces comprise the U.N. troops in Haiti do.

Ira Kurzban, a Miami-based lawyer who represented Haiti’s constitutional government, testified to the disappearance of the justice system in Haiti. He pointed out that the United States itself recognizes this “fact” by refusing to deport back to Haiti Emmanuel “Toto” Constant, the leader of the death-squad FRAPH (Front for Advancement and Progress of Haiti), on the grounds that the Haitian justice system cannot guarantee him a fair trial.

Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, coordinator of the Fondasyon 30 Septanm, an organization which demands justice for the victims of Haiti’s 1991 coup, testified to the complicity of the United States in the systematic undermining of the democratic process in Haiti by recounting how he was personally threatened by the deputy U.S. ambassador before he escaped from Haiti after the coup.

Thomas Griffin, a civil rights and immigration lawyer in Philadelphia, who was a federal parole and probation officer for 10 years before he became a lawyer, testified on his human rights investigation in Haiti during November 2004. He interviewed people suffering from gunshot wounds to the head who were afraid to go to the hospital because people who go to the hospital with gunshot wounds wind up in the morgue.

Griffin said that he investigated the burning of 60 bodies after a massacre in Belair. He said that misprinted Haitian currency was used as incineration fuel, noting that this suggests de facto government involvement. Only government officials generally have access to reject money.

Kevin Pina, a U.S. filmmaker and journalist who has lived in Haiti for over a decade, testified to how he obtained the video detailing the July 6 Cité Soleil massacre, in which Fredi Romélus testified. He described witnessing Haitian police fatally shooting unarmed peaceful demonstrators under the noses of troops of the U.N. Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH). He had obtained videos of Haitian police planting guns in the hands of their dead victims. Pina also described how Haitian police arrested and detained him after he, acting as a journalist, tried to investigate their attempt to plant weapons in the house of Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste, imprisoned since July 21 (see *Haiti Progrès*, Vol. 23, No. 27, 9/14/2005).

California-based researcher Jeb Sprague, Canadian activist Yves Engler and U.S. Labor delegation member Seth Donnelly also testified.

Fresh off a plane from a trip to the Middle East, Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General and founder of the International Action Center, also addressed the Tribunal. He will lead a Commission of Inquiry to Haiti in early October. Court-martialed Capt. Lawrence Rockwood, lawyer/investigator Tom Griffin, and unionist Dave Welsh have agreed to serve on it. Other prominent U.S. political figures have also expressed interest.

In addition to Ben Dupuy, who is a former ambassador for President Aristide and secretary general of the National Popular Party (PPN), the Tribunal's presiding judges were Lionel Jean-Baptiste, a Haitian lawyer based in Chicago, and Lucie Tondreau, a leader in the Miami popular organization Veye Yo. The Investigating Judge was Brian Concannon, head of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), and the chief prosecutor was Desiree Wayne, a lawyer based in Colorado, assisted by journalist Kim Ives and unionist Ray Laforest.

Of the 21 people indicted, the Investigating Judge asked the jury to find three guilty and referred the rest of the cases to the Commission of Inquiry for further investigation. He also proposed that de facto Haitian Prime Minister Gérard Latortue be indicted.

The jury rendered guilty verdicts for former Haitian National Police Chief Léon Charles, former MINUSTAH military commander Brazilian Lt. General Augusto Heleno Ribiero Pereira, and the Chilean MINUSTAH chief Juan Valdes.

In coming months, the Tribunal will convene additional sessions in the U.S., and if possible, in Canada and Haiti. All of the sessions will present eyewitness and expert testimony, which will be collected in the case file.

Four buses with Haitians and North Americans traveled from Brooklyn, Queens, and Irvington, NJ to Washington, DC to attend the Tribunal on Friday evening. Afterwards, the delegates spent the night in a progressive church.

The next morning, the Haitian contingent marched in the September 24 march of 300,000 against the occupation of Iraq, Palestine and Haiti, a slogan seen on many signs and placards and raised in speeches.

When addressing the tens of thousands massed in the Ellipse behind the White House, Ramsey Clark called for "the impeachment of Bush for crimes against peace, and his campaign of shock and awe against civilians in Iraq." Clark pointed out "the United States spends more on weapons than the rest of the world combined." He accused the United States of being directly responsible for the destruction of democracy in Haiti.

If Bush is impeached, Clark said he dreams about Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an honorable, just and upright man, becoming president of the United States of America. That would certainly change the attitude of the United States.

Ben Dupuy, who spoke right after Clark, noted how Bush had to send U.S. Special Forces to Haiti to destroy democracy and expel a democratically elected president. He asked: "Why is the U.S. afraid of Cuba, Venezuela, and Haiti? It is not because they possess weapons of mass destruction, those so-called WMDs. It's because they are democratic."

Cindy Sheehan, the mother who led a month-long sit-in in Crawford, Texas -- Bush's vacation home -- demanding a meeting with the president so he could tell her personally why her son had to die in Iraq, shouted, her arms upraised.: "We have to do our jobs as Americans. If nobody else will hold them accountable, we will. We'll be the checks and balances on this out-of-control, criminal government."

Jesse Jackson, the well-known U.S. civil rights figure, spoke after Sheehan. "The response of the Democratic Party has been weak, too weak." Jackson was once upon a time candidate for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. He felt that the antiwar movement in the United States has to raise the occupation of Palestine and Haiti.

During the march, a white police officer from the Executive Protection Service, which guards the White House, the U.S. Treasury, and other highly sensitive installations, noticed a white North American marching with the Haitian contingent, carrying a Haitian flag and a sign denouncing the de facto government and calling for the return of Aristide as president. The cop asked the demonstrator: "What do you know about Haiti? How can you support a dictator like Aristide?"

The protester responded: "I lived in Haiti for some time. I know Aristide is a democrat, a man of the people. Aba makout! Aba Latortue! Viv Aristide!"

There were more than a few North American marchers carrying Haitian flags. When asked, they generally responded that the lack of democracy in Haiti because of U.S. intervention was an issue that the antiwar movement had to address.

Both the International Tribunal on Haiti and the September 24 March on Washington were great successes. They augur well for the growing international movement resisting war and demanding justice for the crimes of U.S. aggression around the world.

September 30: "Stop the War against the People of Haiti"

September 30 marks the 14th anniversary of the 1991 coup against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Heeding a call by the Fondasyon 30 Septanm, demonstrators in 38 cities around the world will hold actions around the date to make the following demands:

- 1) Stop the massacres of the poor by UN troops, Haitian National Police and paramilitary mercenaries under police control;
- 2) Restore the democratically elected government of President Aristide;
- 3) Free Father Jean-Juste and all the more than 1000 political prisoners in Haiti's jails;
- 4) End the brutal US/UN occupation - Restore Haiti's sovereignty;
- 5) Open an independent inquiry into the February 29, 2004 coup and forced removal of President Aristide, including the role of the US, France and Canada. (See accompanying article on the newly launched International Tribunal on Haiti.)

The demonstrations on or around September 30, 2005, spanning 14 countries, will be part of an international campaign in solidarity with the Haitian people. There will be actions in three countries in Africa, two in Europe, two in North America and seven countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among the U.S. cities where there will be actions are San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Jose, Hayward, CA, Miami, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, New York, Newark, NJ, Boston, Northampton, MA, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Portland and Enterprise, Oregon, and Detroit; in Canada, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Charlottetown, Fredericton, Halifax, Tatamagouche (Nova Scotia), New Glasgow (Nova Scotia), and Antigonish (Nova Scotia). Demonstrations will also take place in Durban, South Africa; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Kinshasa, Congo; Santiago, Chile; Brasilia, Brazil; Dublin, Ireland; San Jose, Costa Rica; Paris, France as well as Guadeloupe, Martinique, Dominica, Dominican Republic, and Benin.

For more information, or to add your city or town to this mobilization, email the Sept 30th Organizing Committee at sub@sonic.net or call 510-847-8657.

A Letter from Father Gérard Jean-Juste

Imprisoned priest, Father Gérard Jean-Juste, dictated the following letter to one of his lawyers, Bill Quigley, on September 27, 2005 from his prison cell.

Dear Friends:

Your work has been having results - keep up the pressure! The cause of justice in Haiti is moving forward.

Today in Port-au-Prince, Condoleeza Rice made a point to challenge the unjust legal system in Haiti. She held up Yvon Neptune and myself as examples of how the system continues to work injustices for the people of our country.

There is no doubt that your pressure is making the US and the UN face the injustices in Haiti. Every one of you who has demonstrated, written a letter, made a phone call, stood up for justice in Haiti - I thank you.

You have uplifted my spirits and the spirits of all who struggle against the machinery of injustice.

I am holding on to the log of hope in the swirling waters of injustice. The church tried to knock my hands off the log when they suspended my priestly duties when someone tried to register me as a candidate for president. I am appealing the decision to suspend me from priestly duties. Since I am not a candidate for the election for president, I should be able to continue my service as a priest. But I cannot do that until I have the canon law books to defend myself. But I will do it when I can.

Contrast how the church treated me with the recent case of two white belgian priests who were being deported by the Dominican Republic for standing with the Haitian poor in that country. I salute my brothers for taking that action. There the church stood with them and even the papal nuncio came to their defense. Why is it different when I try to stand with the poor of Haiti? I too am a friend of the poor. Why is there no church support?

That is why I was so happy to see all the church leaders from many faiths sign onto a letter asking for my release - your courage helps me and will hopefully help our sisters and brothers of faith in Haiti's struggle for justice and peace.

I want to hold on to the log of hope and cross over the waters of injustice to freedom and to continue serving the people of Haiti.

I am very sensitive about the people in the St. Claire's community. As you know, the church serves hundreds of meals to hungry children several times a week. We are only able to do this with the help of the What If Foundation and Margaret Trost and all those who join in helping the poor. Please support this work and help continue our program of feeding the poor.

Punish me but do not punish the poor people. Even though I am currently under suspension, the people should not suffer.

Thank you for uplifting my spirits and keep up the pressure for human rights and justice for all the people of Haiti!

Père Gérard Jean-Juste
Pacot Annex Haitian National Penitentiary

Bill Quigley is a professor of law at Loyola University New Orleans and is assisting Mario Joseph of BAI in his representation of Fr. Jean-Juste. Bill is a volunteer with the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti.

Haiti: Priest jailed legally

Despite the protest of Amnesty International, Haitian authorities claim a jailed Roman Catholic priest and former Miami activist is being legally detained.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

jcharles@herald.com

Miami Herald

Sept. 29, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Haitian authorities say the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste is jailed legally and not as the result of a political vendetta against supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest who ran the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, has steadfastly denied all the charges against him. Amnesty International has designated him a prisoner of conscience.

The popular priest was first arrested Oct. 13 on charges of inciting violence against the state, based on allegations that he used his church to plot the interim government's ouster. He was freed on his own recognizance 48 days later.

Jean-Juste supporters have claimed that case was closed by the first investigative judge assigned to it, Jean-Sénat Fleury, for lack of evidence. Fleury resigned to run in the Nov. 20 presidential election.

But the case remains open, said Jean Pérs Paul, the investigative judge now in charge of all cases against Jean-Juste.

Jean-Juste was arrested again on July 21, this time on charges of complicity in the murder of prominent journalist Jacques Roche and causing a public clamor.

Roche was kidnapped July 10 and was found shot to death five days later in what some Haitians believed was the work of pro-Aristide gunmen. Jean-Juste turned up at the funeral, claiming to be a relative, and was attacked by the crowd.

Days later, Jean-Juste also was charged with illegal possession of weapons. Paul said the charge stemmed from his admission that he had received five guns from the Aristide government.

But Paul acknowledged that Jean-Juste claimed he does not know the current whereabouts of the guns, and that a search of his St. Claire three weeks ago turned up nothing.

Defense lawyer Mario Joseph has a different version. "Father Jean-Juste admitted that he signed a letter which allows five security agents to use five guns. He is not, in my knowledge, facing the charge of illegal possession of gun," Joseph told The Herald.

This week, Jean-Juste was suspended by the Roman Catholic Church here after political supporters attempted to register him in the Nov. 20 presidential race. The country's electoral council did not allow the registration. On Wednesday, the priest said he would appeal the suspension.

Paul and the former prosecutor in both cases, Jean-Pierre Audain Daniel, declined to show The Herald the evidence behind the charges but insisted the arrests were are not politically motivated.

13 Haitians come ashore in Broward

BY JULIA NEYMAN

Miami Herald

Sept. 28, 2005

Two boats carrying Haitians came ashore early Tuesday morning in what officials are calling an illegal smuggling effort.

The Broward Sheriff's Office apprehended the migrants -- one boatload in Pompano Beach and the other in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea -- early Tuesday morning, according to BSO.

"The migrants were on two boats that were occupied by 13 [people]," BSO spokeswoman Liz Calzadilla-Fiallo said. "Eleven of the 13 were captured and detailed by border patrol. Two remain at large."

Calzadilla-Fiallo said separate phone calls alerted BSO that migrants were coming ashore. She said the boats may have drifted apart en route.

One boat came in at 101 N. Riverside Dr. in Pompano Beach; the other in the 1500 block of State Road A1A in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea.

Border Patrol responded to BSO calls at about 2 a.m. Authorities took the eight men and three women, all unrelated, into custody without incident.

The migrants were not harmed and were being processed at the Border Patrol's Pembroke Pines Office, according to spokesman Scott McDonald.

Under the U.S. "wet foot/dry foot" policy, Cuban migrants who touch American soil are allowed to stay in the country, but Haitians and those of other nationalities do not have the same guarantee.

Border Patrol believes the undocumented migrants were smuggled in, said McDonald. The agency is investigating with BSO and Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Haiti: Low Registration Raises Doubts over Election Legitimacy

Haider Rizvi,

OneWorld US

Tue Oct 4, 2005

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 3 (OneWorld) - As Haiti prepares for elections under increasing pressure from the United States, civil society groups are questioning whether the polls will lead to the formation of a legitimate government in that strife-torn country.

Their concern over the outcome of next month's election emanates from the fact that more than half of the 4.5 million eligible voters would not be able to exercise their democratic right since they have not been able to register with the electoral authorities.

"Free and fair elections are one important step in the long road that Haiti must walk," said Jake Miller of Grassroots International, a U.S.-based organization that has been helping to organize Haitian farmers and other poor communities for years.

"But for elections to be fair all segments of societies must be able to participate," he added.

Presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for November 20, and possible runoffs would take place on January 3 of next year. A ballot to elect local government officials is set for December 11.

A week before the close of registration, only 870,000 out of about four million potential voters had registered and none had yet received the new national identity cards required to vote, according to the International Crisis Group, a Geneva-based independent research group.

Democracy activists say the registration process is fraught with a number of problems, including the near-absence of registration centers in rural areas and shanty towns.

In a recent statement, interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue indicated that he would be happy if some 2.5 million out of 4.5 million voting-age Haitians registered to vote.

Peasant and grassroots organizations, as well as the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission, have raised serious concerns about the low level of voter registration, according to activists who are closely monitoring the political situation in Haiti.

"Registering for an ID card is one thing, but traveling to one of the few polling stations and then queuing all day is another," says Charles Arthur of the Haiti Support Group, a U.K.-based human rights organization.

Arthur estimates that only about 50 percent of those registered will actually cast their votes, which he said "would represent a low turnout."

Despite a possible low turnout, it seems that both Haiti's interim government and the George W. Bush administration in the United States are more than willing to brand the new government as legitimate and valid.

Last month's surprise trip to Haiti by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was intended "to underline the United States' determination that the elections take place before the end of the year, as planned, and that a new government takes power early in 2006, again as planned," according to Arthur.

Rice appealed to Haitians to register to vote while urging the interim government to do more to prepare for elections.

It was important to register "any candidate who wants to participate in the election," she said.

But critics note that her statement failed to address the questionable exclusion of Father Gerard Jean-Juste, a leader of the Lavalas Family Party, from registration as a presidential candidate.

Father Jean-Juste's supporters say he couldn't appear in person before the election authorities--a registration requirement--because he was in prison. He was arrested in July on what Arthur called the "dubious charge" of possessing illegal guns.

Observers say the Lavalas Family Party of the ousted Prime Minister Jean Bertrand Aristide continues to enjoy popular support among the urban poor and the peasants throughout the country.

President Aristide, who is now living in exile in South Africa, has repeatedly charged that U.S. military officials kidnapped him at gun point and forced him into exile.

Since Aristide's ouster in 2004, Haitians have been suffering from violence of all description, including arbitrary arrests, detentions, murders, and kidnappings, despite the presence of about 7000 UN troops.

Aware that election preparations were not going so well, Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, urged the Haitian authorities to "work closely with the international community to resolve outstanding technical impediments to elections."

"We must do our best to ensure that elections are inclusive, and that they contribute to reconciliation and stability," he told a high-level ministerial meeting at the UN headquarters in New York, which also included the interim prime minister Latortue.

Annan noted, however, that Haiti "will not achieve stability without a concerted attack on poverty and deprivation. This is a long-term project."

Miller, of Grassroots International, says that long-term project requires access to fertile land and clean water for the rural population.

"The struggle for human rights, including economic and social rights, won't be solved with the election of a new government alone," he argues, "but only through the ongoing struggles of popular movements for social change."

War on the Poor in Haiti
By Benjamin Melançon,
NarcoSphere
Sun Oct 2nd, 2005

Lavalas lumped with criminal gangs while police and paramilitaries free to kill
Activist and Z-Net contributor Justin Podur reports from Port-au-Prince on Friday:

Last week we talked to Desmond Molloy, an old soldier who heads the 'DDR' program for MINUSTAH, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti. 'DDR' stands for Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. Molloy's previous experience, among other conflicts, was in Sierra Leone. There, he explained, there were two armed sides - rebels and the government - waging a political and military conflict. [...]

Molloy came to Haiti expecting to do similar work. But Haiti's 'DDR' was quickly changed when MINUSTAH and Molloy himself discovered there was 'no political space' for a dialogue between the two sides. He would have hoped the interim government would have shown more understanding and magnanimity, but they did not. Those who overthrew the government and were in power with the support of the US, Canada, and France, in other words, saw no reason to talk to the people they had defeated. So while the former Haitian Army and paramilitaries who overthrew Aristide's government remain armed and remain a threat, and while the police continue to commit human rights violations, MINUSTAH's DDR has retooled itself to focus on gangs.

Read the whole post at Podur's blog.

Hugo Chavez Denies Seeking Dictatorship

By CHRISTOPHER TOOTHAKER

Associated Press Writer

Herald Tribune

Oct. 4, 2005

CARACAS, Venezuela -- Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez defended his administration Tuesday, denying he's seeking a dictatorship and accusing local media of falsely portraying him as authoritarian.

Chavez, a fervent nationalist who was first elected in 1998 and is up for re-election next year, says he fully backs democracy. His critics claim that he holds increasing power over the national legislature, the courts and the electoral council.

"From North America and parts of South America, they continue attacking Venezuela, trying to say there is a dictatorship here," Chavez told oil company executives in the northwestern state of Falcon. "Those who say I want to lead Venezuela toward a dictatorship are the same ones who tried to establish a dictatorship here, and they were defeated."

Chavez, a former paratrooper with strong ties to Cuba's Fidel Castro, accuses Venezuelan television channels of playing a role in a short-lived 2002 coup against him and a devastating national strike that ended in early 2003.

He took aim in particular at the Venezuelan television channel Globovision, which regularly broadcasts critical coverage. He said the private channel is a "lackey" of the U.S. government.

Leopoldo Castillo, a Globovision talk show host, said Chavez often criticizes the media because he objects to unfavorable news and opinions.

"The president doesn't like bad news," Castillo said in a telephone interview. "He likes to control everything, even information."

Relations between Caracas and Washington have been tense, with U.S. officials expressing concern over the health of democracy in Venezuela and Chavez criticizing "imperialist" U.S. actions in places from Latin America to Iraq.

Venezuela is the world's fifth largest oil exporter and Chavez says he hopes to keep selling oil to one of its top markets - the United States - despite the political differences.

In a related development, a former director of the nation's anti-drug authority said Tuesday that Chavez was given false information, which he then used to accuse U.S. drug agents of espionage.

Mildred Camero, who was removed as director of the National Anti-Drug Committee in July, said a report submitted to Chavez accusing the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration of spying was "made up" by other officials.

Chavez suspended cooperation with the DEA in August because its agents were allegedly involved in espionage.

Camero said an alleged DEA "espionage headquarters" mentioned by Chavez was actually a center for collecting information on suspects convicted of drug-related crimes in other Latin American countries.

"The report was contrary to what (really) occurred," she said.

Venezuela has been a key smuggling route for illegal drugs. U.S. authorities have charged that Venezuela's government has failed to effectively fight the trafficking and last month removed the country from a list of nations cooperating in anti-drug efforts.

One Island, Two Worlds
By Jared Diamond
The Globalist
Tuesday, October 04, 2005

Haiti and the Dominican Republic may share one island but their histories unfolded quite differently. In “Collapse,” this week’s Globalist Bookshelf selection, Jared Diamond gives insight into the vast economic, political and ecological differences between these two Caribbean countries.

Why did the political, economic and ecological histories of these two countries — the Dominican Republic and Haiti — sharing the same island unfold so differently?

Compared to the Dominican Republic the area of flat land good for intensive agriculture is much smaller.

Part of the answer involves environmental differences. Hispaniola’s rains come mainly from the east. Hence the Dominican (eastern) part of the island receives more rain and thus supports higher rates of plant growth.

Hispaniola’s highest mountains (over 10,000 feet high) are on the Dominican side and the rivers from those high mountains mainly flow eastwards into the Dominican side.

The Dominican side has broad valleys, plains and plateaus and much thicker soils. In particular, the Cibao Valley in the north is one of the richest agricultural areas in the world.

Environmental differences

In contrast, the Haitian side is drier because of that barrier of high mountains blocking rains from the east.

Compared to the Dominican Republic — a higher percentage of Haiti’s area is mountainous — the area of flat land good for intensive agriculture is much smaller. There is more limestone terrain and the soils are thinner and less fertile and have a lower capacity for recovery.

Social and political differences

Note the paradox. The Haitian side of the island was less well endowed environmentally but developed a rich agricultural economy before the Dominican side. The explanation of this paradox is that Haiti’s burst of agricultural wealth came at the expense of its environmental capital of forests and soils.

Haiti’s elite identified strongly with France rather than with their own landscape and sought mainly to extract wealth from the peasants.

This lesson — in effect, that an impressive-looking bank account may conceal a negative cash flow.

While those environmental differences did contribute to the different economic trajectories of the two countries — a larger part of the explanation involved social and political differences — of which there were many that eventually penalized the Haitian economy relative to the Dominican economy.

In that sense, the differing developments of the two countries were over determined — numerous separate factors coincided in tipping the result in the same direction.

French help

One of those social and political differences involved the accident that Haiti was a colony of rich France and became the most valuable colony in France's overseas empire. The Dominican Republic was a colony of Spain, which by the late 1500s was neglecting Hispaniola and was in economic and political decline itself.

Hence France could and chose to invest in developing intensive slave-based plantation agriculture in Haiti, which the Spanish could not or chose not to develop in their side of the island. France imported far more slaves into its colony than did Spain.

A difference in population

As a result, Haiti had a population seven times higher than its neighbor during colonial times — and it still has a somewhat larger population today — about 10 million versus 8.8 million.

Haiti's poverty forced its people to remain dependent on forest-derived charcoal for fuel, thereby accelerating the destruction of its last remaining forests.

But Haiti's area is only slightly more than half of that of the Dominican Republic so that Haiti with a larger population and smaller area has double the Republic's population density.

The combination of that higher population density and lower rainfall was the main factor behind the more rapid deforestation and loss of soil fertility on the Haitian side.

In addition, all of those French ships that brought slaves to Haiti returned to Europe with cargos of Haitian timber, so that Haiti's lowlands and mid- mountain slopes had been largely stripped of timber by the mid-19th century.

Long-term investing

A second social and political factor is that the Dominican Republic — with its Spanish-speaking population of predominantly European ancestry — was both more receptive and more attractive to European immigrants and investors than was Haiti with its Creole-speaking population composed overwhelmingly of black former slaves.

Hence European immigration and investment were negligible and restricted by the constitution in Haiti after 1804 but eventually became important in the Dominican Republic.

Using the land

Those Dominican immigrants included many middle-class businesspeople and skilled professionals who contributed to the country's development.

Haiti's burst of agricultural wealth came at the expense of its environmental capital of forests and soils.

The people of the Dominican Republic even chose to resume their status as a Spanish colony from 1812 to 1821 and its president chose to make his country a protectorate of Spain from 1861 to 1865.

Still another social difference contributing to the different economies is that — as a legacy of their country's slave history and slave revolt — most Haitians owned their own land, used it to feed themselves and received no help from their government in developing cash crops for trade with overseas European countries.

The Dominican Republic, however, eventually did develop an export economy and overseas trade.

Deforestation

Haiti's elite identified strongly with France rather than with their own landscape, did not acquire land or develop commercial agriculture and sought mainly to extract wealth from the peasants.

Finally, Haiti's problems of deforestation and poverty compared to those of the Dominican Republic have become compounded within the last 40 years.

Burned by biofuel

Because the Dominican Republic retained much forest cover and began to industrialize, the Trujillo regime initially planned, and the regimes Balaguer and subsequent presidents constructed, dams to generate hydroelectric power. Balaguer launched a crash program to spare forest use for fuel by instead importing propane and liquefied natural gas.

But Haiti's poverty forced its people to remain dependent on forest-derived charcoal from fuel, thereby accelerating the destruction of its last remaining forests.

From the book "Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed" by Jared Diamond, Copyright © 2005. Reprinted by arrangement with Viking, a member of the Penguin Group.

Almost 9,300 migrants detained by US Coast Guard over 12 months

Tue Oct 4, 2005

AFP

MIAMI (AFP) - Almost 9,300 people, mostly from the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba, were detained at sea as they sought to make their way to the United States illegally, according to figures for the fiscal year ended September 30.

The number of interdictions was down from the previous year, when the US Coast Guard (USCG) detained 10,899 people, most of whom were repatriated.

Of the total, 3,612 were from the Dominican Republic, down from 5,014 in fiscal 2004; 2,712 were from Cuba, up from 1,225; and 1,850 were from Haiti, down from 3,229.

Another 983 migrants were from Ecuador, 55 from Mexico, 32 from China and 45 from other countries, according to the USCG figures.

"We need people to understand that migrant smuggling operations are every bit as dangerous as taking to the water in overloaded or unseaworthy vessels," said Coast Guard spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Chris O'Neil.

"Trying to illegally enter the United States from the maritime domain is inherently dangerous and threatens the lives of all involved," he said Tuesday.

Impoverished Haiti offers U.S. Katrina aid

05 Oct 2005 00:11:12 GMT

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Oct 4 (Reuters) - The Haitian government and a group of businessmen from the poorest country in the Americas on Tuesday offered the United States \$36,000 in aid donations for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The interim authorities in the unstable and destitute country of 8 million people, half of whom survive on a dollar a day, acknowledged the amount was modest.

But Finance Minister Henri Bazin said it was a testimony to the friendship and solidarity between the richest nation in the hemisphere and its poorest neighbor.

"Despite our meager means, we want to be counted among those who showed solidarity toward you (the American people)," Bazin told the top U.S. diplomat in Haiti, Timothy Carney, during a joint news conference.

"Others have provided more substantial assistance, but for us, we let our heart speak when we give that modest contribution," he said.

Haiti's government, appointed after former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled into exile in February 2004 after an armed revolt and street protests, gave \$25,000. The Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce donated \$10,000 and a private bank contributed \$1,000.

About 30,000 Haitians live in Louisiana, where Katrina killed around 900 people after coming ashore on Aug. 29 and flooding the low-lying city of New Orleans. Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce chairman Rene Max Auguste said thousands of those had been affected by the disaster. More than 200 people were also killed in Mississippi.

Haiti is no stranger to natural disasters itself. Hurricane Jeanne, while still a tropical storm, triggered flash floods in September 2004 that killed 3,000 people in the Haitian port city of Gonaives.

The U.S. government donated \$34 million in emergency relief to Haiti then.

Haiti bodyguards 'beat reporters'
BBC News
Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2005

Mr Alexandre's security is contracted out to a US firm.

Guards working for Haiti's interim leader have been accused of assaulting at least two journalists at a ceremony in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

The journalists say they were hit as they tried to cover the inauguration of the Supreme Court, attended by President Boniface Alexandre.

Mr Alexandre's chief of security said the reporters tried to force their way in after arriving late.

He said US company DynCorp had provided the president's bodyguards.

Jean Wilkens Merone, a reporter for Radio Metropole, told the Associated Press news agency he was cursed at and beaten inside the courthouse by a guard.

He said at least one other journalist was attacked.

The head of presidential security, Vladimir Champagne, said several journalists were able to attend the ceremony without any difficulty.

He said he had not seen any beatings.

"We have safety measures that reflect the situation in the country," he said.

"We have to find a way for the president to be safe while the press remains free to report on him."

Politically motivated violence has continued in Haiti despite the presence of more than 7,000 United Nations peacekeepers, installed after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Haiti in September to warn that preparations for presidential and legislative elections - due on 20 November - were lagging behind.

Haiti's presidential election to be delayed

BY JOE MOZINGO

Knight Ridder Newspapers

The Miami Herald

October 3, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - (KRT) - As 32 presidential candidates square off in a nation racked by a rebellion last year, Haitian and foreign officials conceded Monday they will likely need to postpone the Nov. 20 election because preparations are in disarray.

The Provisional Electoral Council is yet to hire hundreds of regional election supervisors, identify polling locations or begin recruiting up to 40,000 needed poll workers. And the ballots cannot be printed until the Haitian Supreme Court resolves disputes over who can and cannot run for president.

In closed-door meetings last month, the council barred at least two heavyweight candidates, prompting recriminations from their supporters and highlighting how contentious the race for power here has become.

And Friday, the council created even more furor, indicating it was going to reject dozens - if not hundreds - of candidates for the Senate and Chamber of Deputies.

Haitian and foreign officials contacted Monday agreed that, with all these problems and controversies, it is unlikely the election will take place on time. "There is no way this is going to happen on November 20," said Council member Patrick Fequiere.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed during a visit to Haiti last week that elections must be "open, inclusive and fair" to restore democracy and order after the rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide last year. And she urged the electoral council to work more closely with U.N. advisers to ensure that the balloting puts a new government in the National Palace by a constitutional deadline of Feb. 7.

In all, 54 candidates turned in applications to run for president. The council rejected 22 of them - mostly independent candidates who did not gather the 40,000 signatures required but also a key figure in Aristide's Lavalas Family party and a Haitian-American tycoon.

Dumarsais Simeus - who runs a \$100 million dollar food empire in Texas - accused the council of seeking "to control the outcome of the next presidential election by barring candidates." He is appealing his disqualification to the Supreme Court.

Simeus was rejected because the Constitution does not allow Haitians who obtain other citizenships to run for public office. Officials involved in election preparations said he wrote that he was a U.S. citizen on his landing card when he last arrived at the airport here.

Critics say this type of scrutiny is capriciously applied; the council certified at least one other known U.S. citizen, Miami Lakes, Fla., businessman Samir Mourra.

A council spokesman could not be reached for comment.

"Simeus was seen as a heavy contender," said Fequiere, the council member, who for months has complained that it lacks transparency and objectivity.

He said electoral observers are just beginning to vet the process.

On Sept. 19, a group funded by the Canadian government, The International Mission for Evaluating Elections in Haiti, requested any documents showing how parties and candidates were disqualified, as well how key jobs in the election apparatus were awarded.

Last Wednesday, the group sent a letter to the council president saying that it was yet to receive the documents.

"We were assured that we would receive some basic administrative and technical documents that we have since then been waiting for with the impatience you can imagine," wrote the group's director, Anne Fuller.

Few people are willing to hazard a prediction on how this election will play out - whether it will produce a government with any true authority, even whether it will take place this year.

And the political future is just as sketchy.

While parties are making all sorts of alliances and jockeying for constituencies, no big ideological themes are emerging.

The list of 32 presidential contenders is a panoply of the old and new, familiar and unknown. If none gets a majority on the first round, the two top contenders will face a run-off.

Lavalas - which has been the main voice of Haiti's poor majority for 15 years - is split between those who want to participate in the election and those who want to boycott it on the grounds that Aristide was illegally pushed out.

And the council rejected two of their key figures as presidential candidates. Former Sen. Gerald Gilles registered at the last minute, but was rejected reportedly because other party leaders did not endorse his candidacy. And supporters of Gerard Jean-Juste - a firebrand priest and voice of the more strident wing of the party - were told they could not submit his papers because he was in jail.

The government charges, among other crimes, that Jean-Juste was involved in the murder of a journalist, but Amnesty International calls the former Miami resident a political prisoner. He has denied all charges.

Businessman alleges plot against candidacy

Miami Herald Wire Services

October 2, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Latin Briefs

A wealthy U.S. businessman who has been barred from running for president of his native country said Saturday that the government used forged documents to reject his candidacy.

Dumarsais Simeus said he will ask the Supreme Court to reinstate him as a candidate for the Nov. 20 elections -- the first since the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

"They are trying everything to exclude me, even illegal methods," Simeus said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council said Simeus, the son of illiterate rice farmers who went on to become head of one of the largest black businesses in the United States, could not run because of his U.S. citizenship.

Prime Minister Gérard Latortue told reporters last week that the businessman had signed signed documents upon arrival in Haiti in February indicating he is a U.S. citizen.

The documents, Simeus said, do not show his signature. "I have never signed such a document and it is not my handwriting," he said.

**Bodyguards Beat Up Three Haitian Reporters
Leading The Charge
03 October, 2005
By ALFRED de MONTESQUIOU**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - A rare public appearance by Haiti's interim president turned violent Monday when his bodyguards, apparently Americans contracted by the U.S. State Department, beat up several journalists at the country's central courthouse, the journalists said.

A reporter for independent Radio Metropole, Jean Wilkens Merone, said he was cursed at and beaten inside the courthouse by another guard. He said at least one other journalist also was struck.

Champagne said he did not see the beatings because he was inside the courthouse next to Alexandre at the time. He said the building was very crowded during the ceremony, but more than a dozen journalists were allowed in without any problems.

Because of persistent insecurity in the capital, Alexandre — who became interim president after Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004 — rarely leaves the presidential compound without tight security.

Southlake businessman still eyes Haiti's top job

By TRACEY EATON

The Dallas Morning News

Monday, October 3, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE – His detractors say he's an American citizen and has no business running for president of Haiti.

But Dumarsais Siméus, the wealthy chairman of a Mansfield, Texas, food-processing company, says he's determined to stay in the Nov. 20 race, despite being told by Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council that his U.S. citizenship bars him from running.

Mr. Siméus said he qualifies because he never gave up his Haitian citizenship. He has appealed the council's decision and vows to fight to save his candidacy.

"I will take this fight to the Supreme Court because this movement is committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure that every Haitian has the right to choose their next leader," Mr. Siméus said in a radio address Friday.

Some Haitians struggling to keep the country from descending into complete bedlam say that Mr. Siméus ought to be given a chance.

"The presidency of Haiti is such a hard job, it should be advertised as an international position," said Leslie Voltaire, education minister under former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. "We should open it up to the best-qualified person in the world."

Background

Mr. Siméus, 65, certainly has credentials. Born to illiterate peasants in the Haitian countryside, he journeyed to the United States in 1961, put himself through college and worked at Atari Inc. and other companies around the world before creating Siméus Foods International, now the largest black-owned business in Texas.

"Let's be real," Mr. Siméus said recently, sitting at a restaurant next to the swimming pool at the posh Villa Creole hotel in Pétienville, his unofficial headquarters in an upscale Port-au-Prince neighborhood. "Haiti is broken. The debate should be over how we put together the optimum team to move this country forward. Forget about whether a candidate lives in Haiti or not. We need the best sons and daughters of Haiti to come save it."

Indeed, Haiti is a mess.

More than half the population subsists on less than \$1 per day. Millions have no clean drinking water, and more than 70 percent no electricity. Government institutions provide few services and have little control over 60 percent of the nation's territory. Gangs hold sway over large swaths of densely populated slums in Port-au-Prince. And earlier this year, murders, kidnappings and assaults hit their highest level in the capital since 1994.

This is the nation Mr. Siméus wants to lead.

But under Article 135 of the Haitian Constitution, candidates for president must be Haitian citizens who have lived in Haiti continuously for five years before running for president. Mr. Siméus has been living in Southlake, Texas, and it doesn't appear he is eligible, said James Morrell, director of the Haiti Democracy Project, a Washington, D.C., research group.

"But," Mr. Morrell asked, "why be a stickler about this? His qualifications are certainly there. He's shown the ability to make things work."

A leap?

Others wonder how he would make the transition from his cushy Southlake lifestyle to the gritty, often murderous world of Haitian politics. And they ask how running a company that makes sausage links and nacho dip qualifies one to be a political leader.

Charles-Henri Baker, a Haitian businessman who is also vying for the presidency, questioned whether Mr. Siméus knows what's been going on in his native land.

"How can he really understand what occurs in Haiti? With what he sees on the Internet?" Mr. Baker told a Miami radio station in August.

Mr. Siméus brushes aside such talk.

"I respect all those candidates who are running. I believe they are patriotic. However, I don't think any of them match the credentials I bring to the campaign."

While Mr. Siméus was barred because of his U.S. citizenship, other candidates were rejected mostly because they submitted incomplete paperwork, officials said. The council rejected 22 candidates in all.

Another candidate, the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a prominent figure in ex-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Lavalas Party, was barred because he has been jailed on suspicion of involvement in the abduction and slaying of a local journalist. Mr. Jean-Juste has denied the accusations.

Approved candidates

The 32 approved candidates include two presumed front-runners: former President Rene Preval, a one-time close ally of Mr. Aristide, and Marc Bazin, a former prime minister.

If no one wins more than half the vote, runoffs will be held Jan. 3.

As president, Mr. Siméus said he would:

"Make sure that all the kids who want to go to school can go. Make sure they have at least one meal a day to eat. Make sure you have a government that really serves the people. And I'd make sure I bring hope to Haiti. It's a country with a lot of misery."

Kimberly Siméus, the candidate's 46-year-old wife, said she's not surprised her husband decided to run for president.

"He loves his country so much," she said. "This isn't about power or a title. I think he wants a legacy in his life."

Political marketing

Simon Fass, a University of Texas at Dallas professor and author of *Political Economy in Haiti: The Drama of Survival*, said that Mr. Siméus' chances "depend a lot on how he markets himself, and how much money he is willing to invest in political marketing."

Mr. Fass said poor Haitians might find his rags-to-riches story appealing. But, he added, he isn't convinced that Mr. Siméus will do anything different or new.

Mr. Siméus, a former adviser to Mr. Aristide, said he is paving new ground, raising funds from supporters in Haiti and abroad lest anyone accuse him of trying to buy the election.

He is also trying to build alliances in Haiti, which has been deeply divided, particularly since Mr. Aristide's forced departure in 2004.

"From all the feedback I've gotten, our candidacy has shaken up the political establishment," he said.

Still, many ordinary Haitians haven't heard of Mr. Siméus.

"We don't really know him," said Jean-Réné Auguste, 42, a teacher in Port-au-Prince.

"He's been gone for 40 years," said another man, Ernso Talus, 25. "He doesn't know the reality of Haiti, the problems of Haiti."

Arielle Jean-Baptiste, an associate with the Haiti Democracy Project, agreed.

"He's a stranger," she said. "He has no footprints here."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Dumarsais Siméus

Age: 65

Place of birth: Pont-Sonde, Haiti

Education: bachelor's degree, Howard University; master's in business administration, University of Chicago

Experience: Worked at Atari Inc. and other companies including the now-defunct TLC Beatrice Foods, where he rose to president. Started Siméus Foods with the help of a \$55 million loan in 1996, according to Black Enterprise magazine. The company supplies such firms as Burger King, T.G.I. Friday's, Quizno's Subs and Hardee's.

Marital Status: Married to Kimberly Siméus, a former human resources employee for Unilever

Quote: "The people are connecting with our message. We need security. We need to create jobs. We need to send children to school. All the people of Haiti are ready for that. And that's why they are going to elect us president of the country."

Haiti's 'Napoleonic' judicial system in disarray

Incarceration of two high-profile Aristide supporters highlights 'dysfunctional' administration of justice in beleaguered nation

Knight Ridder /

By Jacqueline Charles

Taiwan News Online

October 2, 2005

Nearly four weeks after a judge found Maxo Accime not guilty of sexual assault and ordered him freed from jail, he remained locked up.

He was released this week, but only after his family and friends paid a series of "fees" to the judge and court secretary to do their jobs. Instead of defending them, two of their previous attorneys tried to cut their own deal with the police and a prosecutor, who demanded US\$1,500 to execute the release order.

"If you want justice in Haiti you got to ... pay everyone all along the way," said Jeff Cazeau, a Miami lawyer who monitored the Haitian system when he served with the Miami-based U.S. Southern Command from 1997 to 1999.

The continued jailing of two high-profile supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide - the Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste and former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune - has shined a harsh spotlight on Haiti's decrepit judicial system.

Haiti's French-based legal system follows a "Napoleonic" code in which defendants bear the burden of proving their innocence - the opposite of America's bedrock standard of innocent until proven guilty.

Antiquated laws

Experts here and abroad say the Haitian system has been crumbling for decades, hamstrung by a labyrinth of antiquated laws and battered by political pressures and corruption. So slowly do the wheels of justice churn in Haiti that only 274 of the 3,115 prisoners here in August - 8.8 percent - had been convicted, according to Haitian government figures. Many had not been officially charged.

"When we talk about people being in jail a long time without being judged, it's a grave concern," said Gervais Charles, president of the Bar Association of Port-au-Prince.

Although prolonged pretrial detention is nothing new here, or in other parts of the hemisphere, the jailings of Neptune and Jean-Juste, a former Miami Haitian rights activist, have brought the issue to the fore.

Neptune was arrested 15 months ago on charges of helping orchestrate the killing of Aristide opponents in the city of St. Marc during the revolt last year that helped topple Aristide. Jean-Juste, arrested last October and again in July, faces several charges, from inciting violence against the state to complicity in the murder of a prominent Haitian journalist.

Both deny the charges and brand them politically motivated. They accuse the current U.S.-backed interim government of targeting Aristide supporters while allowing anti-Aristide killers to roam the streets.

Haiti observers say that although the interim government of President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has failed to improve the judicial system and protect human rights, the system is little different from what it was under Aristide. He was repeatedly criticized for using the justice system to punish political enemies and interfering with the judiciary on politically sensitive cases.

"It's pretty much business as usual," Cazeau said.

In a blistering report, reminiscent of those it issued during the Aristide years, Amnesty International said in July that the administration of criminal justice in Haiti "remains highly dysfunctional."

"Crimes such as unlawful killings, arbitrary and illegal detentions, ill-treatment of prisoners and deaths in custody are still commonplace and remain unpunished," the report said.

Although former interim Minister of Justice Bernard Gousse did recommend a handful of judicial reforms - dramatically increasing the pay of judges, making the judiciary financially independent and overhauling the government's training school for judges - they were overshadowed by the arrests of scores of Aristide supporters. He denied any political bias in his work.

"If someone is breaking the law and he says he is an Aristide supporter, we are not arresting him because he is an Aristide supporter but because he is breaking the law," said Gousse, who resigned in June. "And I am not going after you. The law is going after you."

Three weeks ago, Gousse's replacement, Henri Dorlean, began holding trials at the country's largest prison in hopes of reducing the backlog and resolving the allegations of politically inspired detentions on thin legal grounds. But purging the prisons won't fix what is a long-term institutional problem, judicial experts say.

"We don't have the means to do our job," said Judge Jean Peres Paul, president of the Judges Association here and the investigative magistrate assigned to the Jean-Juste case. While the judiciary is more independent today than under Aristide, he added, it remains in disarray.

Some investigative magistrates, whose work is similar to a U.S. grand jury, have up to 350 cases and lack office space, sometimes even typewriters, and certainly decent salaries.

"They dropped a bunch of hot cases in my lap and I don't even have a car to get around," said Paul, who makes less than US\$550 a month. He said such low salaries help breed corruption among judges and prosecutors.

Further evidence

As further evidence of how broken the system is, a former top Haitian National Police commander overseeing five investigative units including drug probes, testified in a Miami federal court last week that he had never taken the witness stand in a Haitian court. In the United States, Drug Enforcement Administration agents and supervisors routinely testify in trial.

Some help is on the way, however, with the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the U.S., Canadian and French governments each financing judicial reform programs in Haiti.

"There are a lot of challenges," said Gerard Fontain, who heads a judicial reform program backed by the U.S. Agency for International Development. Among the most serious, he added, is the inability of most poor Haitians to hire an attorney.

"This is why the rich people in Haiti do not stay in jail. They can hire an attorney and push their cases along and have a rapid trial," he said. "Most people are being forgotten in the courthouse."

One man in fact spent three years in the National Penitentiary before a group of law interns, providing free legal help as part of a Bar association program, helped free him, said Gervais Charles.

"We found no file," said Charles, whose group has helped clear away 150 cases in three months. "It was after a lot of research, we found the paperwork saying the guy should be freed."

Nov. 20 election in Haiti unlikely

As preparations remained in a state of chaos, officials began to concede that Haiti's planned Nov. 20 presidential election will have to be postponed.

BY JOE MOZINGO

jmozingo@herald.com

Miami Herald

Oct. 4, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE - As 32 presidential candidates square off in a nation racked by a rebellion last year, Haitian and foreign officials conceded Monday that they will likely need to postpone the Nov. 20 election because preparations are in disarray.

The Provisional Electoral Council still must hire hundreds of regional election supervisors, identify polling locations and begin recruiting up to 40,000 needed poll workers. And the ballots cannot be printed until the Haitian Supreme Court resolves disputes about who can and cannot run for president.

In closed-door meetings last month, the council barred at least two heavyweight candidates, prompting recriminations from their supporters and highlighting how contentious the race for power here has become.

And Friday, the council created even more furor, indicating it was going to reject dozens -- if not hundreds -- of candidates for the Senate and Chamber of Deputies.

IMPOSSIBLE TARGET

Haitian and foreign officials contacted Monday agreed that, with all these problems and controversies, it is unlikely the election will take place on time. "There is no way this is going to happen on Nov. 20," said council member Patrick Fequiere.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed during a visit to Haiti last week that elections must be "open, inclusive and fair" to restore democracy and order after the rebellion that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. And she urged the electoral council to work more closely with U.N. advisors to ensure that the balloting puts a new government in the National Palace by a constitutional deadline of Feb. 7.

CANDIDATE GLUT

In all, 54 candidates turned in applications to run for president. The council rejected 22 of them -- mostly independents who did not gather the 40,000 signatures required but also a key figure in Aristide's Lavalas Family Party and a Haitian-American tycoon.

Dumarsais Simeus -- who runs a \$100 million food empire based in Texas -- accused the council of seeking "to control the outcome of the next presidential election by barring candidates." He is appealing his disqualification to the Supreme Court.

Simeus was rejected because the constitution does not allow Haitians who obtain other citizenships to run for public office. Officials involved in election preparations said he wrote that he was a U.S. citizen on his landing card when he last arrived at the airport here.

Critics say this type of scrutiny is capriciously applied; the council certified at least one other known U.S. citizen, Miami Lakes businessman Samir Mourra.

A council spokesman could not be reached for comment.

"Simeus was seen as a heavy contender," said Fequiere, the council member, who for months has complained that it lacks transparency and objectivity.

He said electoral observers are just beginning to vet the process.

On Sept. 19, a group funded by the Canadian government, the International Mission for Evaluating Elections in Haiti, requested any documents showing how parties and candidates were disqualified, as well as how key jobs in the election apparatus were awarded.

On Wednesday, the group sent a letter to the council president saying that it had not yet received the documents.

NO THEMES EMERGING

Few people are willing to hazard a prediction on how this election will play out -- whether it will produce a government with any true authority, even whether it will take place this year.

And the political future is just as sketchy.

While parties are making all sorts of alliances and jockeying for constituencies, no big ideological themes are emerging.

The list of 32 presidential contenders is a panoply of the old and new, familiar and unknown. If none gets a majority on the first round, the two top contenders will face a runoff.

Lavalas -- which has been the main voice of Haiti's poor majority for 15 years -- is split between those who want to participate in the election and those who want to boycott it on the grounds that Aristide was illegally pushed out.

And the council rejected two of Lavalas' key figures as presidential candidates. Gerald Gilles, a former senator, registered at the last minute but was rejected reportedly because other party leaders did not endorse his candidacy. And supporters of Gerard Jean-Juste -- a firebrand priest and voice of the more strident wing of the party -- were told they could not submit his papers because he was in jail.

The government charges, among other crimes, that Jean-Juste was involved in the murder of a journalist, but Amnesty International calls the former Miami resident a political prisoner. He has denied all charges.

USAID Field Report Haiti Aug 2005

Program Description

Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Date: 31 Aug 2005

In response to growing political turmoil in Haiti, OTI initiated the Haiti Transition Initiative in May 2004 with implementing partner International Organization for Migration. The program emphasizes stability-building measures in key crisis spots through the implementation of quick, visible small projects and activities that promote peace with the following objectives: enhance citizen confidence and participation in peaceful political transition, with specific focus on disaffected communities; promote peaceful interaction among conflicted populations; and constructively engage groups that threaten the peaceful political transition.

Country Situation

MINUSTAH steps up operations - A 12-hour operation in Cite Soleil signaled an increased level of assertiveness by the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) following months of criticism. However, the U.N. concluded that the Cite Soleil section of Port-au-Prince remains under gang control, and security forces are still unable to enter inner areas or conduct foot patrols. One of Haiti's most powerful gang leaders, General Toutou, said he would be willing to surrender if U.N. peacekeepers guaranteed his safety. It is believed that Toutou, whose real name is unknown, is behind many of the kidnappings and killings that have added to the instability in Haiti.

Mass deportations from the Dominican Republic continue -- The Dominican Republic resumed deportations to Haiti in August, returning more than 1,000 people. Haiti recalled its top diplomat to the Dominican Republic after three Haitian migrants were beaten and burned to death in an attack in that country.

Reports accuse Aristide government of stealing -- According to two new reports by the Central Unit for Economic and Financial Investigations and the interim government in Haiti, former President Jean-Bertrande Aristide's government illegally channeled at least \$55 million in public funds into private firms that existed only on paper. Government investigators allege that the money was sent into Aristide's charities. Aristide denies any corruption.

Election schedule revised -- Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council twice extended the deadline for political parties to register for upcoming elections, agreeing on Sept. 15 as the final date. Various political parties and groups in civil society have expressed the hope that this additional time will allow moderate candidates from former President Aristide's Lavalas Party to register, thereby ensuring a broader participatory process. On Aug. 9, the interim government announced that local elections will be postponed until a date in late December; presidential and legislative elections will be moved up one week from Nov. 13 to Nov. 6, with a runoff election to be held Dec. 11. Also, a new political coalition was formed in August, regrouping four conservative parties, including the CREDO Party of former President Prosper Avril.

Rebel leader released from prison -- A Haitian rebel leader, Louis-Jodel Chamblain, who once led a paramilitary group accused of killing and torturing thousands of people, was released from prison in August. He was jailed in April 2004 on two counts of murder. He also took part in the armed uprising that ousted President Aristide in February 2004.

Change of guard -- The U.S. ambassador to Haiti, James B. Foley, who had led the U.S. Embassy in Haiti since May 2003, left his post in August. He will be replaced on an interim basis by Timothy Carney, former U.S. ambassador to Haiti.

USAID/OTI Highlights

A. Narrative Summary

The Office of Transition Initiatives is continuing to build strong relationships within the municipalities of St. Marc, Petit Goâve and Cap Haitien, and in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. Significant effort is being put into increasing the number of grants approved each month to boost the level of engagement of community members in municipal-improvement activities and to offer short-term wages for labor projects, especially for at-risk youths, in conflict-prone communities. An expansion of activities to the southern city of Les Cayes, where the Haiti Transition Initiative (HTI) team will open a new sub-office in the coming weeks, also has taken place. Many opportunities in Les Cayes have already been identified through a field visit and coordination with MINUSTAH.

Twenty-six "Play for Peace" summer camps were held throughout OTI target cities in August. Camps in Port-au-Prince finished at the end of the month, but other camps were to continue into September for Cap Haitien, St. Marc and Petit Goâve. The camps in Cap Haitien have been particularly appreciated by the community because they not only provide a healthy alternative to violence for local youths, but they also ensure that roughly 3,200 impoverished youths receive at least one meal each day. Complementing the camps are four projects that will train select camp participants in the art of crafting radio stories about the camps and their impact. These projects will establish a mentor system for the youths with the assistance of the RAMAK community radio network.

Staff in St. Marc will build on the positive momentum generated in La Scierie, a St. Marc suburb, by the Play for Peace camps to strengthen the Haiti Transition Initiative's presence in this extremely sensitive area. The political situation in La Scierie continues to grow more tense as political pressure mounts to free former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, currently jailed (without charge) for his participation in the alleged La Scierie massacre. HTI staff recently paid a visit to the municipality of St. Marc, where the deputy mayor expressed his view that the Neptune issue remains the single factor that could destabilize the town.

In Cap Haitien, HTI staff members continue to build the program's presence in troubled areas of town. In August, HTI took staff from the country's electrical utility on a tour to meet with disaffected community members. The coming weeks will see HTI staff make field visits to Milot, a critical locale outside the Cap Haitien metropolitan area. This place is known as the point from which all northern protests by former President Aristide's Lavalas Party are coordinated.

Violence broke out during one of HTI's Play for Peace summer youth activities in the Martissant neighborhood of Port-au-Prince on Aug. 20. Widely reported in both national and international press as a lynching, the incident was described by HTI partners in this way: National police arrived with members of a gang, and the gang members proceeded to single out "informants" and attack them with machetes. Fatality figures vary from six to 30. Following the incident, the youth camp was suspended, but activities resumed five days later.

HTI staff members believe that the change in mandate of the U.N. Police (UNPOL) has enhanced citizen confidence in the U.N. force, which now has the authority to carry out law enforcement tasks, rather than simply observing and advising. Through the creation of a toll-free crime hotline, UNPOL is helping citizens report criminal behavior, rather than taking the law into their own hands. HTI is working with UNPOL to avoid any more incidents like the attack that took place on Aug. 20 In Martissant.

In Gonaives, tensions also are growing as the anniversary of Hurricane Jeanne approaches. In late August, residents of the Raboteau neighborhood demonstrated to express their frustration with the absence of government assistance in the post-hurricane reconstruction efforts.

B. Grants Activity Summary

In August, OTI approved 40 grants for \$691,003. To date, OTI has approved 189 grants for \$4,325,245.

In Cap Haitien, four canal rehabilitation projects will put a new, cleaner face on the city. The build-up of trash in drainage canals has become a point of contention between communities and the municipality, leading to protests and civil disturbances. These projects will bring together local residents and the Ministry of Public Works to conduct a deep cleaning of the canals, providing employment to 40 to 70 community members for up to five weeks.

OTI approved two labor-intensive projects in the Bel Air and Carrefour-Feuilles neighborhoods of the capital of Port-au-Prince. The clean-up of roads and canals in the Fort National section of Bel Air will bring together several well-respected community groups to collaborate with the Ministry of Public Works to improve a neglected area and employ 50 people. In Carrefour-Feuilles, an area of previous Haiti Transition Initiative involvement, more than 1,500 residents will be employed on a project to prevent erosion and deadly mudslides. By terracing the hillside and building 36 kilometers of drywall, the project will bring much-needed short-term employment opportunities to a volatile population and enable the government to gain stronger control over environmental degradation.

Also in Port-au-Prince, latrine-cleaning grants were approved for public housing projects in the Delmas, Bel Air and Cite Soliel sections. These grants are designed to resolve an existing conflict between residents and the government agency that manages the housing units. In previous years, a nominal fee paid by residents was sufficient to cover the costs of the annual cleaning. However, because of the country's political transition, residents have not paid the fee, leaving the agency insufficient funds to clean the latrines. Responding to a critical community priority, these grants will also focus on building dialogue and restoring trust in the housing organization to return it to a sustainable state.

OTI initiated a Play for Peace summer camp in Petit Place Cazeau, the Port-au-Prince stronghold of Lavalas Party presidential candidate Father Gerard Jean-Juste. In addition, the staff met extensively with residents and local activists to develop a list of community priorities. Three new grants came from these discussions: the rehabilitation of the national school and two "Terrains d'Ententes," a football field and a basketball court. The fruits of these efforts were seen during a recent demonstration attended by 200 people. At the same time that the demonstration was taking place, 300 people were enjoying the summer camp activities. It is believed that this camp prevented the demonstration from being larger and giving greater legitimacy to the protesters. The coming weeks will see a deepening of OTI activities in Petit Place Cazeau, where events like the summer camp will become increasingly important now that Father Jean-Juste has been arrested. His imprisonment has inflamed pro-Lavalas fires in the area and made him a martyr to some Haitians.

HTI Office New Grants in August Total Committed

	Grants Amount (\$)	Grants Amount (\$)
Cap Haitien	10 \$149,260	17 \$ 292,060
Gonaives		
11	\$ 460,530	
Port-au-Prince	21 \$411,748	89 \$2,134,396
Petit Goâve	6 \$ 91,655	43 \$ 802,100
St. Marc	3 \$ 38,340	29 \$ 636,159
Total	40 \$691,003	189 \$4,325,245

C. Indicators of Success

Often it is the small victories that have an impact, and in St. Marc in August a few "little things" collectively demonstrated the positive effect of the Haiti Transition Initiative in target neighborhoods.

In Portail Montrouis, the entire community showed unparalleled unity around the Play for Peace summer camps by enthusiastically assisting with the organization of events and coordination with the government.

Construction of the vocational training school was progressing more quickly than anticipated. The workers were so excited to see activities at the school begin that they asked to work on weekends.

Three HTI projects concluded with positive results. Workers at the vocational training school were pleased when workers from the nearby canal-cleaning project started helping them remove dirt from the construction site. With tools from the Municipal Tool Bank, the workers then used the dirt to fill in holes in the road.

Representatives of the government electrical utility group, EDH, accepted the uncomfortable task of visiting Cap Haitien on a "listening tour." The tour stopped at some of the most neglected neighborhoods of the city. The EDH engineer was peppered with difficult questions, including why EDH was unable to meet the electricity needs of the population. After an animated discussion with leaders of neighborhood committees, the community members endorsed a project proposed by EDH to bring electricity to their neighborhoods. Following a successful model of community-government

cooperation used in Petit Goâve, HTI will soon submit electrification and public lighting projects for Cap Haitien.

NEXT STEPS/IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

In the next month, USAID/OTI Haiti will:

Deepen program expansion in new areas such as Cap Haitien and Petit Place Cazeau in Port-au-Prince.

Establish a new office in Les Cayes and approve first grants.

Continue to work with the International Organization for Migration to improve coordination with MINUSTAH.

Develop an evaluation strategy/methodology to assess the impact of the HTI program to date on stated program objectives.

For further information, please contact:

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Brooklyn Haitians blame the state for violence in Port-au-Prince
by Aina Hunter
Village Voice
October 3rd, 2005

Lucas Batteau, a 45-year-old electrician, has to be prodded a little to show his radical side. In this, he's not unlike the others who lingered to talk politics and light candles for victims of state-sponsored violence in Haiti after Sunday's protest march down Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn.

Standing before a display of grisly, enlarged photographs—many depicting maimed bodies of people said to have been hacked or shot by the Haitian National Police—the co-organizer of the Brooklyn-based Committee Against Genocide in Haiti says he wants to raise consciousness because "people don't see this on CNN." This past weekend, like-minded activists in several cities across the United States staged marches and protests against supporters of Haiti's interim government.

Batteau and his fellow protesters blame increased violence in Port-au-Prince over the past year on the U.S., Canadian, and French administrations—all three generally credited with facilitating the ousting of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. "I was not an Aristide fan," says activist Alex Colas, a 50-year-old service technician. "My views are different from his. But he was elected for a five-year term. Democracy is a principle."

Emblematic of the worsening violence is a widely reported police massacre that occurred at a soccer match in the Martissant neighborhood, south of the National Palace, on August 20.

Human rights observer Anne Sosin of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti told the Voice that police interrupted the game and ordered thousands of spectators to lie on the ground. Many tried to scramble away, climbing over the stadium barriers, only to find that police and civilians Sosin says were informants had encircled the outdoor arena. Armed with machetes, she says, the civilians hacked 10 to 30 people to death as police stood by.

"In some neighborhoods people run and hide when they see the police," Sosin says. "But Martissant has been quite calm in the past few months. People weren't expecting it."

Police spokesperson Gessy Cameau Coicou initially told the Agence Haitienne de Presse that she had received no report of the incident. When the killings began to receive international coverage, however, police said they were investigating.

Academics and human rights groups have long accused the Haitian police of terrorizing slums believed to be Aristide strongholds, and violence is expected to worsen as the November elections approach. Protestors in Brooklyn on Sunday said they have zero faith in the ability of the U.S.—supported interim government to conduct free and fair elections.

Carline Aurelus, 33, a mother and artist, says her extended family in Haiti will not vote because it would be "dumb for them to do so. The election is to keep people quiet—we are not ready for anything like this."

Batteau says it will be a "selection more than an election," because an election under what he calls a U.S. occupation "is illogical." The only solution, he says, is for Haitians to "take their destinies in their own hands."

But not everyone thinks that a boycott, or more fighting, is the best way to demonstrate anger toward the purported orchestrators of the coup. Some members of former president Aristide's party have pointed out that by not participating, liberal-thinking Haitians all but guarantee the success of any number of right-wing, militarist candidates.

This argument doesn't move Sunday's protesters. Having lived through the Duvalier regime, some say it's more important to take a stand against the coup than to strategize about who will take control next. Colas says his family in Haiti has not registered because "anyone who is elected will be a puppet," he says. "Not going to the elections is a vote against the U.S."

Venezuela to include Haiti in PetroCaribe deal
AlterPresse
Tuesday 4 October 2005

During his weekly radio and television shows broadcast on 2 October, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez offered to include Haiti in his PetroCaribe initiative to provide Caribbean nations with oil and petrol.

Eleven Caribbean countries have already agreed to be supplied with fuel on low interest terms and with deferred payment, but the interim government in Haiti has so far not shown any interest in joining them.

At the end of September 2005, the government of Gerard Latortue announced the setting in swing of diplomatic steps, with the Haitian ministry of the Trade, in order to obtain petroleum products at better cost than that of the international market. However, no precision was provided on the countries whose these steps were taken.

All the same, the ethanol would be one of the tracks of energy under consideration with the government of Brazil, whose Foreign Minister Celso Amorin visited Haiti recently.

Chávez's announcement followed a visit to Brazil where he said he had discussed Haiti with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio da Silva (Lula) whose military leads a United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti.

"We're going to give a hand to the people of Haiti", said the Venezuelan leader adding Lula had asked him to provide aid to Haiti, and without giving any further details.

Chávez's remarks about including Haiti in the PetroCaribe agreement come after the country has experienced a series of fuel price rises in recent months.

The price rises have not only forced up transport costs, but have had a knock-on effect on the cost of other essential items too.

In September, a platform of progressive Haitian organizations called the Collective to Mobilize against the High Cost of Living (Kolektif Mobilizasyon Kont Lavichè in Creole) demonstrated against the price rises and started to collect signatures for a petition calling on President Chávez to press for Haiti's inclusion in PetroCaribe.

On 6 September, 2005, nine more Caribbean nations signed up to the PetroCaribe cooperation agreement, under which Venezuela will provide oil to Caribbean countries on concessionary terms.

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez had already signed bilateral agreements with Jamaica and Cuba, and, under the deal signed earlier this month in Montego Bay, Jamaica, he entered similar arrangements with the heads of State or delegations from Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, the

Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname.

Caribbean governments are already calculating millions of dollars in savings arising out of the PetroCaribe oil agreement with Venezuela.

The beneficiary governments will pay 60 per cent of the market price up front, and can finance the remaining 40 per cent by way of a soft loan over 25 years at one per cent interest. The governments can also pay for part of the cost with services or goods such as rice, bananas or sugar.

Venezuela has agreed to supply some 185,700 barrel per day of oil to the region. In order to make this possible, Venezuela will put in place a regional supply, refining, transport and storage network.

Two Caribbean nations declined to take part in the agreement.

Trinidad and Tobago has its own oil resources, and already supplies CARICOM member states with about 60,000 barrels a day in exchange for other resources. Owen Arthur, the Prime Minister of Barbados, which also stayed out of the agreement, said his country's existing energy arrangement with Trinidad and Tobago was effective.

Sources:

Associated Press

Kolektif Mobilizasyon Kont Lavichè

AlterPresse

PS:

'Eye on the Caribbean' is realised by Charles Arthur, and is provided in a partnership between the Haiti Support Group and AlterPresse as a contribution to Haiti's greater integration within the Caribbean region.

Haiti's Biometric Elections: A High-Tech Experiment in Exclusion

by Andréa Schmidt

ZNet Magazine

October 04, 2005

Port-au-Prince, Haiti. A lot of people agree that the upcoming elections in Haiti - the first since Aristide and his government were expelled in the February 29, 2004 coup d'etat - are important.

Members of the international community who supported the coup agree: Canada's special advisor to Haiti, Denis Coderre, has called them "a crossroads," and "a historical turning point." The Haitian business elite who orchestrated the coup - and who are referred to here without irony as "civil society" - also agree. They see the election as a process through which their people can consolidate power. And many Lavalas activists in both rural and urban parts of the country believe that now that the election is underway, it is a critical moment to demonstrate that they are still the party that represents the poor majority in this country.

But there is another reason this elections process is a significant one - and all the more so because almost no one seems to be talking about it. Haiti is about to experience its first biometric elections.

In order to vote, every Haitian over the age of eighteen must register for a new national identification card that will replace previous forms of identification. After the elections, the card will become the mandatory ID for all Haitians, linking them to government services and financial records.

Each new card includes both a digital photo and digital fingerprints. At this point, about 2,9 million voters of a possible 4 million have gone to register for their cards at registration offices set up around the country by the Conseil Électoral Provisoire (CEP), with substantial logistical support from the Organization of American States (OAS).

The question of whether or not biometric national ID cards are desirable has not been publicly debated in the Haitian press, by the interim government, or by Haitian society at large. Most discussion on the registration process has focused on its accessibility to the rural and urban poor. One registration office serves all of Cité Soley, and it is positioned on the outskirts of the area. Peasants in some areas of the country have to walk for four or five hours in order just to reach the registration centers. They will have to make the trip again in order to pick up the card once it is ready.

No one seems to be concerned or particularly aware of the ramifications - threats to privacy, government and intergovernmental surveillance - that accompany biometric identification. People look amused when I relate how a biometric national ID card for Canadians was rejected by parliament in 2003 after much outcry about citizens' right to privacy. The card was proposed by Denis Coderre, Canada's immigration minister at the time, who cited its importance for national security in the wake of 9/11. Immigration Canada ended up instituting a mandatory national ID card only for immigrants with permanent resident status. The card has not yet become biometric, though it carries a digitized strip that contains a range of information that helps the Canadian government track permanent residents.

Patrick Féquiere is a member of the CEP, the temporary administrative body that decided to use this election process to institute national biometric identification. He sees the new system as a victory for a

country where 450,000 people – primarily the rural poor--are effectively disenfranchised because they do not have any form of state identification at all. These people will finally "exist in the eyes of the state."

It makes sense that in a post-coup elections context characterized by massive unemployment, paramilitary violence and reorganization, police impunity, social violence, and heavy international intervention at all levels of governance, a national debate over biometrics is low on Haiti's list of priorities.

But in spite of the rhetoric of inclusion with which the cards are being promoted, the biometric IDs threaten to inaugurate a new and high-tech form of national and hemispheric exclusion for many Haitians.

Biometric identification relies on a computer-driven system that collects unique biological identifiers like fingerprints, retina scans, or digital photos, digitizes them, and stores them in a central database. Each time you present your ID, the computer system checks the identifying data against that which is contained in the database under your name. Other information, such as your date of birth, address, medical history, credit rating, political history, or information collected through surveillance agencies, can also be collected in the database and linked to your identifiers. The information can be shared between governments, which are able cross-reference the data held in different country databases, used to track people entering their country, and to flag people they consider "security risks" or potential terrorists.

A biometric identification system is supposed to make identification more secure by making identity theft - the fraudulent use of someone else's identification to vote, access social services, or cross borders - more difficult.

Critics of such systems cite concerns about the privacy and security of the data collected, and its possible uses by the state to profile, track, and exclude individuals or groups based on their identifiers.

Féquiere claims that the Haitian government does not plan to open its databases to other countries in the hemisphere. But he does say that post-9/11 security considerations influenced the CEP's choice of a high-tech registration system. Moreover, he foresees that when Haitians travel to the U.S., their biometric ID will be checked against the U.S.'s own biometric registries. (Submitting to digitalized fingerprinting is currently the condition of most foreigners' entry to the U.S.)

Used in this way, biometric identification on a mandatory identification card could prove dangerous because of the efficiency with which it institutionalizes and exacerbates the double standards and exclusions that stratify not only Haitian society but the globe. Haiti is a country in which people fighting to survive in the poorest slums are profiled as terrorist chimère, as ex-military commanders responsible for massacres like Jodel Chamblain move about freely. It is also a trafficking port through which much cocaine enters the United States. As in Colombia, the rhetoric of a war against drugs is easily employed to profile, terrorize and kill poor people and progressive activists, while notorious members of the cartels, like Guy Philippe, are allowed to run for the presidency - with the silent blessing of international "protectors" like Canada and the United States.

Moreover, in a global political context in which people like Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen, are already being deported to torture in Syria when they are racially profiled and labeled "terrorist" on a U.S. Flight Watch list, the potential dangers of hemispheric biometric profiling are high.

Haiti's ID cards are being manufactured and digitized out of country, by the Mexican branch of Digimarc, an Oregon-based company that is on the International Foundation for Elections Systems list of suppliers. (IFES works with such organizations as USAID, the National Democratic Institute, and Elections Canada, to provide "targeted technical assistance to strengthen transitional democracies.") Digimarc signed the 1.5 million dollar contract with the OAS, and the company's systems are used throughout the hemisphere. It has produced or is producing biometric voter registration cards for a number of Latin American countries, including Colombia, Honduras, Brazil, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Additionally, it has created biometric drivers licensing systems for thirty-two states in the U.S.

The collaboration of IFES, Digimarc, and the OAS suggest that "democracy strengthening" programs in countries like Haiti are being used to facilitate the implementation of an integrated hemispheric tracking and surveillance program

What better way to integrate an entire country into a biometric surveillance program than to sponsor a coup and take advantage of the silence as political repression, human rights abuses, falling revenues and fear of perpetual political instability preoccupy those who might question a process?

Some thoughts on God-forsaken Haiti

Caribbean Net News

by Anthony Livingston Hall, a Turks & Caicos Islands descendant, Washington lawyer and consultant to the former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, who publishes his own Internet Weblog at <http://ipinions.blogspot.com> offering a Caribbean perspective on international events

Tuesday, October 4, 2005

Haitians face the daunting task of electing a new president next month. Yet, reflecting America's salutary neglect of Haiti, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice went there on a fly-by diplomatic mission last Tuesday and spent almost as much time talking about democracy and fair elections as she spends talking about football and team standings on a typical Sunday afternoon in Washington, DC. (She unabashedly courts the notion of becoming the first female commissioner of the National Football League (NFL).)

But, perhaps Dr Rice treated the occasion so cavalierly because she was as oblivious to the chaos and violence that make elections untenable in Haiti as President Bush was to the chaos and violence that made refuge untenable in New Orleans (in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina).

Nevertheless, in an even more dubious and foreboding diplomatic gesture, South Africa's foreign minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma preempted Dr Rice's pep talk by declaring that "[yes] you can have the elections...there will be a government elected...but we do not think it will actually bring stability and peace and prosperity to Haiti." Indeed.

Given the line-up of over 32 presidential candidates - comprised of sundry paramilitary thugs, opportunistic business leaders and a former president, it's difficult to take issue with the South African foreign minister's pessimistic assessment. The question is: Why does Haiti remain so ungovernable? After all, just last year, it celebrated its Bicentennial as the oldest independent black nation in the world.

Perhaps Haiti is fated to loom amidst the islands of the Caribbean just as Africa is amidst the continents of the world: as a dark, destitute, diseased, desperate, disenfranchised, dishonest, disorganized, disassociated, dangerous and, ultimately, dysfunctional mess.

And, like Africa's intractable maladies, Haiti's blight has become so toxic that no pragmatic politician wants his clout emasculated by being associated with it in any way whatsoever. (Clearly this is why so few prominent Heads of State or other dignitaries even bothered to attend its historic Bicentennial celebrations.)

Meanwhile, Haitians are living a nightmare. And, even though white foreign faces appear as evil forces from time to time, black indigenous faces (like those of the Tonton Macoutes, FRAPH and even Catholic Lavalas devotees) are the constant, central and catalytic characters in Haiti's purgatory.

It is easy to forget how promising Haiti's future seemed when Jean Bertrand Aristide was elected 1990. But, after 14 years of providing more political drama than national development, Aristide was escorted into exile on the paternal wings of the U.S. Marines last year.

He claims that the American government and local businessmen (mostly mulatto bourgeois Europhiles calling themselves “the Group of 184”) orchestrated a coup d’état because they felt his policies focused too much on poor family farmers at the expense of their international financial interests. But the Americans and their Haitian cohorts deny his claims as the delusions of a messianic priest with destabilizing Stalinist predilections.

Whatever the case, there are no saints (or even moral actors) in this ongoing nightmare.

Nevertheless, the facts do indicate that it was Aristide’s successor in 1996, Andre Preval, who initiated land and social reforms to help the poor. And, incidentally, if he were reelected next month, Preval would clearly offer Haitians their best hope for relief and redemption. Although it should be noted that Preval was summarily and, perhaps, irreparably discredited as a captive of business interests by Aristide who discontinued these reforms when he replaced Preval as president for a second time in 2000. So this too might prove an opportunity lost for Haiti.

A far more interesting observation, however, is that from the outset of his reelection, Aristide’s policies and behaviour alienated even his most sympathetic and powerful supporter - U.S. President Bill Clinton. And, given Aristide’s claim of U.S. involvement in his eventual downfall, one cannot discount the fact that America’s boot prints have been conspicuously evident at every step along the trail of Haiti’s historical and continuing descent into a political, economic and social hell.

Therefore, it redounds to America’s eternal shame that despite its prevailing influence, Haiti has never been salvaged from the political strife and unconscionable poverty, hunger and disease that earn it the perennial dishonor as the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. And, as Dr Rice demonstrated, America does not seem disposed to allocate any more of its time and resources to help Haiti treat these chronic ills.

But Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez might see this as an opportunity to use his petrodollars to fund a socialist revolution in Haiti the way President Bush has been funding democratic revolutions throughout Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Alas, hope springs eternal....

Meanwhile, Aristide will shadow the country like a continuing menace no matter who is elected president. Because, as Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue found out, Aristide loyalists (Lavalas Family Party members) are a formidably destabilizing force.

Moreover, no one should doubt that the South African foreign minister’s patent attempt to prejudice next month’s elections was done at the behest of South Africa’s most honoured permanent resident, the exiled Jean Bertrand Aristide himself?

And, it seems certain that Lavalas got the message and, since they still regard Aristide as their earthly saviour, shall redouble their efforts to prolong Haiti’s living nightmare until the path is cleared for the fourth coming of their black messiah.

NOTE: Even as Haiti wallows in chaos and violence, almost every country in the Caribbean is busy rounding up Haitian refugees, on a daily basis, to repatriate them to their rightful place.

**Dispatch 2: Canada's Role in Haiti Profile of Two Chimères: Or, Some Pre-Elections
CMAQ, Quebec, Canada**

Andréa Schmidt, lundi, 03/10/2005 - 22:28

Analyses | Impérialisme

Port-au-Prince, Haiti, September 26, 2005

Today, I met the infamous chimères – two young men, Lavalas activists from the Delmas 2 sector of Bel Air, one of Port-au-Prince's popular neighborhoods. Their names are Désir St Phard and Fan Fan Fénélon, and they are on the run. When I left them late this afternoon, they didn't know where they were going to sleep tonight. But they know where they want to be in a few months, if they can make it.

Fénélon was a guard at the National Palace, on duty the night of February 29, 2005, when Aristide's presidency was kidnapped by U.S. marines. He remembers the half hour of darkness in the palace—the black out during which Aristide was put into a helicopter and flown into exile—and his frustration at his inability to prevent what took place.

Since that black-out, Fénélon has felt threatened. He had every reason to believe that he was a potential political target of paramilitaries led by Guy Philippe (an ex-member of the Haitian army and former police chief, trained by U.S. Special Forces in Ecuador in 1994) who led the rebellion against Aristide or others backed by Group 184--the alliance of civil society (mostly business elites) behind the 2004 coup d'état. But he says that fear didn't stop him from working with Désir and other young Lavalas activists from trying to organize against rising unemployment among the people in their neighborhood—many of them people thrown out of the civil service after the interim government took power.

Things got worse. Fénélon and St-Phard recount how from July 6 to 23 of this year, a dozen unidentified men wearing balaclavas came and torched fifty-four houses in Delmas 2 to the ground. Why? Because the residents were associating—maybe even organizing—with Fénélon, St-Phard and their colleagues. Then a month ago, a friend and colleague of theirs named Ton Ton was hacked to death by paramilitaries wielding machetes.

So now they are hiding, and there is no one to back them up. The Fanmi Lavalas party to which they remain faithful is divided and distracted by the upcoming elections, and the popular movement that brought that party to power twice in ten years is by all accounts in tatters. The sort violent repression that people like Fénélon and St-Phard have experienced over the past year is only the latest tactic in a long list used by the U.S., France, Canada, and Haitian elites to undermine, divide and ultimately destroy that movement. (A history of Lavalas might

appropriately be titled "Twenty-Five Ways to Destroy a Popular Movement.")

The interim government instated after the coup has not protected them, allowing them instead to be targeted by the national police force in the name of security, and scapegoating them for all the kidnappings that have beset Port-au-Prince over the past year and a half. They are bestialized by the national and international press with the label chimère—a reference to the mythical monster which is part serpent, part goat and part lion. And MINUSTAH forces participate in the criminalization, referring to them as gang members, their neighborhoods as gang-infested areas to be pacified.

So Fénélon and Désir are in hiding, moving from place to place, keeping a low profile, not seeing their families much, and trying to avoid the same fate as their friend Ton Ton. Now they want to go to Canada, to find some safety there.

Fénélon and Désir fit a profile--not of gang members or monsters, but of people in need of protection from political persecution. The question is, will Canada accept them as refugees, when that would mean admitting that the Canadian government--which supported the coup and which contributes to the MINUSTAH mission here--is playing a role in creating the very conditions that have left these two young men in need of protection?
<http://haitiaction.net/Links.html>

Soumis par Anonyme

US helps keep Haiti's killers armed
by Ben Terrall
SF Bay Area Indymedia
Monday, Oct. 03, 2005

US "concern" over violence in Haiti is disingenuous hypocrisy

The New York Times recently quoted Juan Gabriel Valdes, chief of MINUSTAH, the UN operation in Haiti, as saying, “the abundance of weapons in this country is a sickness of the whole Haitian society.” Using similar essentialist logic, in January 2005, Roger Lafontant, then senior advisor to coup Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, told the Times, “All our history we have had weapons in our hands. Those who would take away our weapons, would force us to become slaves.” (Lafontant, who started out his career as a student activist supporter of the notoriously brutal dictator Papa Doc Duvalier, since took a “leave of absence” in response to accusations he profited from sales of rice meant for free distribution to the Haitian poor.)

But while part of the UN’s mandate in Haiti involves disarming armed combatants, the United States, key backer of MINUSTAH and the current coup regime, has little interest in reducing the number of guns in Haiti. A March 2005 report from Harvard Law School reported, MINUSTAH’s failure to disarm is decidedly the product of a political will, not a weak mandate.” A Haitian radio journalist told me during my last trip to Haiti that the UN disarmament program is a “good idea but it doesn’t answer its task because it targets the poorest. There are many people with more arms—business people, drug dealers, security people. They’re better armed than the poor because they’re rich.”

From the large numbers of Haitian police I saw in Port-au-Prince toting T 65s, M-16S, M-1s, and MP5s w/night scopes, it is hard to believe the oft-repeated right-wing line that Haitian police are “outgunned” by what the coup regime calls ubiquitous “bandits,” who given the identities of civilians killed by HNP and UN “peacekeepers”, include women and children in the city’s poorest neighborhoods.

But the military aid from Washington just keeps on coming.

As Brian Concannon wrote at the September 24 / 25, 2005 edition of Counterpunch.org, “The August 20 soccer massacre in the Grande Ravine neighborhood is illustrative of both the Haitian police's brutality and the futility of trying to reform the Haitian government by feeding it guns and money. On that day, police accompanied by machete-wielding civilians attacked a soccer crowd of thousands, shooting or hacking to death at least six and as many as thirty spectators. Our tax dollars were at both ends of the killing. The soccer game was sponsored by a USAID program, to promote peace in the neighborhood. The U.S. also sponsors the killers, the Haitian National Police, by providing guns and weapons despite a consistent history of police killings over the last eighteen months. When the House of Representatives passed Rep. Barbara Lee's resolution to block arms transfers on June 28, the State Department responded by announcing on August 9 that it would send \$1.9 million worth of guns and other equipment to the police, before the elections and presumably before the Senate could vote on the resolution.”

A Lawyer for Whom Winning Isn't Everything
By MICHELLE YORK
New York Times
October 4, 2005
BINGHAMTON, N.Y.

In mid-September, William P. Quigley was almost blown into this small middle-class city by Hurricane Katrina.

Professor Quigley, who teaches law at Loyola University in New Orleans, was in New York to be an adviser to four antiwar protesters who were defending themselves against federal conspiracy charges after splashing their blood at a military recruiting center.

Skip to next paragraph

Kirk Condyles for The New York Times

William P. Quigley was an adviser to four antiwar protesters who were convicted last week of damaging government property and trespassing.

He and his wife, Debbie Dupre Quigley, had endured first Katrina and then, since they had temporarily relocated to Houston, the winds of Rita. Other people in circumstances similar to these might have understandably cut further obligations short. But Professor Quigley said he believed his next client coming later in the week - a prominent political prisoner in Haiti, the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste - was worse off.

Then while he awaited a verdict in the Binghamton case and prepared for his case in Haiti, his cellphone rang. It was Johanna Berrigan, who was calling from amid a sea of protesters in front of the White House. More work was in the forecast.

"What time are y'all going to risk arrest?" Professor Quigley asked. "God bless. I wish I was there, too."

Professor Quigley, 56, has represented a network of human rights organizations and activists.

He once wanted to be a Roman Catholic priest. He turned to social activism, and met his wife while working in a housing project in New Orleans. She worked to help put him through law school.

After graduation, he started a private practice, dividing his time between traditional cases, so he could support his wife and two sons, and pro bono work defending activists and the poor.

In 1991, Loyola recruited him, and that turned into a professorship, with the school encouraging after-hours pro bono work on civil and human rights cases.

Often the protesters he defends readily acknowledge that they broke the law in pursuit of a larger goal.

"I've lost more cases than any lawyer in the country," Professor Quigley said. "But for great people and for great causes."

Kathy Kelly, a founder of Voices in the Wilderness, a pacifist group, was happy to have him represent the organization even though a judge eventually fined her group \$20,000.

"It's a relief to have someone in the legal system who will stand up for what he believes in," she said.

The sympathetic outlook does not always win him fans. "I don't interject my personal views into an argument; Bill does," said Miroslav Lovric, an assistant United States attorney who prosecuted the Binghamton case. But to Professor Quigley's clients, the fact that he identifies with them is endearing.

That is what happened on Sept. 26, when a jury in Binghamton convicted the antiwar defendants of damaging government property and trespassing. Jurors, however, acquitted the group of the most serious charge, federal conspiracy.

After the defendants and their supporters stopped applauding, Professor Quigley moved outside to answer reporters' questions. The rain began to pour. He paused and said, "They say these are the remnants of Hurricane Rita," as he braced against a gust of wind. "I can't escape it."

Riding tides of trouble
By Dan Carpenter
Indianapolis Star
October 2, 2005

When I got Bill Quigley on the phone Wednesday afternoon, he was riding through the frenzied streets of downtown Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on his way to the U.S. Embassy to plead the case of a Catholic priest he had just visited in prison.

During the previous 10 days, the Indianapolis-born lawyer could have been found in New York City, where he successfully defended four anti-war protesters against federal conspiracy charges.

Before that, Quigley and his wife, Debbie, spent five days and four nights in the New Orleans hospital where she worked as a nurse, surrounded by floodwaters that reached 8 feet and trying to get help for 1,300 people, 200 of them extremely ill, 45 of whom died from conditions caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Bill and Debbie weren't sure when they would be able to return to their home in New Orleans, but they were hoping to finally get the electricity turned on in their temporary house in Houston, where his employer, Loyola University School of Law, has set up shop for the balance of the semester.

And you say you've had a bad month?

"We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate," Quigley shouted over the midday din of one of the world's poorest cities. "We were in a hospital where 45 people died and we're alive. There's a good chance we have a home to move back to. Thousands can't say that. With this good fortune comes some responsibility to help out others who are less fortunate."

That would not be a conversion phenomenon for the professor, who runs Loyola's legal clinic for the poor, defends Death Row convicts and treks to Haiti on behalf of people such as Gerry Jean-Juste, a beloved activist priest jailed by the government that violently ousted the twice-elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Quigley delivered to the U.S. Embassy and Haitian officials a letter signed by more than 200 American religious leaders asking that Jean-Juste, held since late July without formal charges but accused of murder, be freed.

In the elections scheduled for November, Jean-Juste is deemed a potential grass-roots choice, but he's not a U.S. choice. The Bush administration, never friendly to Aristide, has committed \$600 million to the election, twice the annual budget Aristide had to run the country.

"The Catholic Church has threatened to suspend him because he might be a candidate, and the government says he can't be a candidate because he's in prison," Quigley cried. "It's a merry-go-round. But he's prayerful, upbeat, just a terrific guy."

And a victim, Quigley maintains, of the same injustice that left the poor of his beloved New Orleans vulnerable to disaster and diverted a wealth of resources "to a war most people don't think we ever should have started."

Having long hoped that Haiti could become like New Orleans, he now sadly says it's so.

Quigley's impassioned perception of the interconnectedness of peace and justice issues has driven him to tireless advocacy work and national prominence. Last week, being driven through Haiti and headed for Houston, he slowed down for a moment.

"One lesson we have learned in the last four or five weeks is that we all need to treasure the life we've had, we all need to treasure our family and our friends and to see everything else as nonessential. Hug

your kids, hug your family, and try to be nice to the people from New Orleans who are ending up in every community in the United States. They need it."

Carpenter is a Star op-ed columnist. Contact him at (317) 444-6172 or at dan.carpenter@indystar.com.

Wyclef Jean - originally of the Fugees
By: Dominick A. Miserandino
The Celebrity Cafe
October 5, 2005

Wyclef Jean is well known for both the Fugees and his solo career. What stands out most though is the mind behind his music. Wyclef doesn't act politically because it is a popular thing to do but because he really cares about the people and issues that he is singing about.

DM) You've recently recorded an album in Haitian Creole for Haiti, and your song "If I Were President" has played prominently in today's political environment. Is there a fine line between politics and music?

WJ) First of all, I think politics should be called poli-tricks. I think the fine line between politics and music is that if you ever change your speech you become a politician. My message is the same where ever I go. Wherever there is a platform where I can speak on issues I'm going to always do that because I think that's a natural vehicle to speak on issues. As I'm getting older, I feel that I'm getting a little more active. I'm not trying to be a politician or anything. I find that a lot of what I'm doing are a little more related to issues that effect the average person.

DM) Were you always interested in social issues?

WJ) Since I've been in school. My little brother is a lawyer and it was as if we were both supposed to go to law school. The music just happened to work out for me. I remember being in history class and it was the most fun class. It didn't just teach you about American history but it went around the world teaching you how things functioned.

DM) Maybe I'm reading this wrong, but it seems that lately you're even more active politically?

WJ) I think that when you look from the first Fugees to the very last CD, you'll find a few songs talking about the same issues. I don't feel I'm doing anything different than when Public Enemy came out. I look at myself as a modern day CNN. If something is going on I'm going to let you know what's going on. All you have to do is pick up my CDs and you'll find three or four songs about current events.

DM) When it comes to the charity work like your work with Haiti do you have the chance to see the results first hand?

WJ) The thing about it is, sometimes I feel that I'm too involved. I went there a few times and I was personally on flood relief myself, in the boots and all. My family sometimes tells me that I'm too deep into it. I always believed in action. You can't just say something. When they hear "Celebrity Charity" they think it's all just talk.

DM) Do you find you get lost in it?

WJ) You definitely get lost in it. When something happens to someone you really start to think about it. "Why did this happen to him? What separates me from this person and why didn't it happen to me?"

DM) Can you take a step back for yourself in this?

WJ) That's really something that I feel like I've been fighting with myself on. If you're doing something for somebody sometimes you feel like saying, "This time I feel like doing it for me." which is painful for me mentally. I always say that its like a good song. Sometimes I can't sleep until I can put down a good song. That's still something that I need to probe and find out. They say that meditation might help. Maybe I'll try that.

DM) I can imagine that seeing what's going on down there must be upsetting.

WJ) It is upsetting but I feel like I was chosen was for this work. I'm not the first Haitian in the music industry. The thing about Haiti is that it's like the only place in the Caribbean that doesn't have that New York culture. It's the only place you can feel that energy. You feel heaven and earth at the same time. When you're somewhere like that with the right development, it's like paradise.

DM) Is this reflected in your last album "Welcome to Haiti Creole 101"?

WJ) When you listen to the CD you can hear undertones of the consciousness. You can feel the tone of the area and it's people.

African Union Issues Statement on the Situation in Troubled Haiti
Addis Tribune, Ethiopia
October 3, 2005

The African Union, in a statement issued last Saturday, expressed deep concern over the political unrest and violence which prevailed in Haiti over the past few weeks and eventually led to the departure from office of President Aristide.

The statement said while concerned about the slow response of the international community to the developments in Haiti, the African Union expresses the view that the unconstitutional way by which President Aristide was removed set a dangerous precedent for duly elected persons, and wishes that no action be taken to legitimize the rebel forces.

The African Union, the statement said, supports the call by CARICOM for an investigation under the auspices of the United Nations to clarify the circumstances leading to his relinquishing the presidency.

Reaffirming the commitment towards the African Diaspora expressed during the Maputo Summit, and especially the solidarity with the first independent black nation in the world, the African Union accepts that President Aristide be received and granted asylum in Africa. The African Union pledges full support to the country which will be agreed upon to grant such asylum.

The statement continued to say after due consultations, the African Union has set up a committee of Heads of States to consult and follow up the unfolding developments in Haiti. The African Union has decided to undertake immediate consultations with both CARICOM and eventually the United Nations in order to discuss the conditions for a quick return to constitutional democracy.

The statement concludes that in support of the actions undertaken by CARICOM, the African Union reiterates its commitment to the people of Haiti in their efforts to create conditions for rebuilding the country's economy and civil society, restoring the democratic structures, processes and institutions in a bid to further enhance their safety, well-being and progress. n

Haiti, the struggle continues

by Pierre Beaudet

ZNet

October 02, 2005

There has been considerable debate on the left in North America about the current situation in Haiti. As part of this debate, there have been accusations that those of us critical of Aristide have somehow sold out to the forces of evil. The situation in Haiti is dire and deserves a serious debate rather than accusations and counter accusations. Some of these accusations have been directed against Alternatives. Over the years, Alternatives, a Montreal-based solidarity movement, has stood by several popular movements in Haiti and extended its communication skills to a number of community media and journalist associations. Back home in the meantime, Alternatives has helped a number of organizations from the Haitian Diaspora in Canada to participate in the campaign of solidarity for Haiti, including pressing the Canadian government for more generous aid policies and more support for a genuine democratic process involving the society at large, and not just the political elites.

More than 200 years ago, the African slaves of Haiti defeated French and later Spanish and British imperialism. The first republic of the hemisphere had a very difficult beginning. France and Britain, then later the United States never gave in to what was perceived as a mortal threat to the interests of the slave-owners. The Africans in Haiti were also split between various factions combining race and class factors, which did not help to create the conditions for a democratic state. In the early part of the 20th century, the US intervened directly with military occupation and repression. Resistance continued, however and in the 1930s, a new populist movement came about under François Duvalier (the father). After flirting with the popular classes, Duvalier established his own dictatorship, courting an African «middle class» and enlisting Haiti in the Cold War led by the United States.

The rise and fall of Aristide

In the 1980s, Duvalier (the son) was unable to crush the rising tide of people's resistance to the dictatorship. Out of this, a charismatic priest active in the shantytowns of Port-au-Prince, Jean Bernard Aristide became the spokesperson of the movement. In 1990, he was swept into power through Haiti's first democratic elections. But US imperialism and the local ruling group could not accept this democratic verdict. A few months later, the military overthrew Aristide opening a new cycles of violence and repression during which many of the popular leaders were executed, jailed or exiled. In 1994 under Haitian and international pressure, the US was forced to bring back Aristide from his Washington exile. Aristide's movement, Lavalas, which was a sort of rainbow alliance during its first incarnation, began to fumble after the return of a transformed President who was mostly concerned with reaffirming his control rather than engaging in the political, social and environmental reconstruction of the country. Many supporters of Lavalas broke away, including most of the left factions that had supported him initially. Dissidents of various stripes became the target of Aristide, such as the famous journalist-agronomist Jean Dominique and many other popular leaders. Subsequent elections were rigged to the extent that most of the opposition boycotted the futile exercise. In the last presidential election in 2000, less than 15% of the Haitians bothered to vote (for René Preval, the "stand-in" for Aristide). By 2003 and 2004, popular demonstrations, strikes and riots multiplied, creating more disturbances. In the meantime, the economy went bankrupt, increasing Aristide's drive towards the side of drug dealers who transformed Haiti into a major smuggling operation.

Descent into hell

All throughout that period, the big international players kept out, creating around Haiti an invisible wall of isolation and neglect. None of them were interested really in supporting the democratic opposition. For the United States particularly, Haiti had to be saved from itself only to avoid a major influx of boatpeople. Later, the old gangs of Duvalierists and ex-military thugs engaged into their own destabilization with the help of the Dominican government and mafia. They came out with their guns and kicked Aristide's supporters out of several cities. Port-au-Prince became ungovernable. Then the panic-button was hit. In February, US Marines came to «surgically remove» Aristide who was shipped to Africa. In a few days, the coup was endorsed by the UN under a joint resolution to the Security Council presented by France, the US and Canada. Later a UN-mandated Brazilian-led contingent was sent to protect a «transition» in principle managed by a non-elected government. The left and many of the popular movements that had led the democratic struggles in the last decade came out of this series of extraordinary events quite stunned. Some decided to side with the transitional government in the hope of rebuilding a minimum space for democratic governance. Others aligned with Aristide defending the principle of national sovereignty above and beyond anything else, including the crimes that everyone knew Aristide had committed. Some of the radical groups refused however to side with one or the other and announced that they would fight «on two fronts». In the meanwhile, the situation has gravely deteriorated. Most of the members (with exceptions) of the «interim government» have been ineffective as it was predicted in the beginning. Aristide has succeeded in joining hands with some of the hard-nose gangs in the capital to create havoc. Many of his supporters on the other hand have been arbitrarily repressed, even those who had nothing to do with crime or drug trafficking. In addition to the misery and famine inflicted on the Haitian people, insecurity and violence now prevail in many parts of the country. Tons of promises by the «international community» to clean the mess have been left into the air.

The enemy of my enemy is not my friend

Aristide who has been suppressed by the United States has tried successfully to present himself as a «martyr» and a victim of imperialism. For sure, he was punished, as were several others who have dared to confront at one point or the other the arrogance of the powerful. He is not alone in that family that includes genuine popular leaders but also distorted populist thugs such as Noriega, Saddam Hussein, Robert Mugabe and others. In their desire to overthrow these regimes, imperialism is much less concerned with democracy as it is with the protection of its own interests. While «bad» dictators are overthrown, «good» dictators are supported and promoted by Washington when they are able to 'do the job' properly, like in Saudi Arabia, Colombia or Indonesia. In any case, should solidarity movements support Aristide because he was punished by the US? Well-know Haitian left activists like Camille Chalmers say that in no way can they support Aristide even though they are highly critical of the way he was expelled and more over, of how the international community has handled the situation since then. The sovereignty of the nation has to be preserved, and at the same time, the Haitians want democracy and social justice, not the coming back of the thugs. How to do that? Chalmers concludes that there is no escape from rebuilding an alternative through the popular movements that struggle and

propose. There is no quick-fix and the task is tremendous. This is where solidarity movements should stand.

Pierre Beaudet is the Executive Director of Alternatives, a Quebec-based NGO.

Father Tom ventures to help where others no longer dare

By Danna Harman | Staff writer

The Christian Science Monitor

October 4, 2005 edition

CITÉ SOLEIL, HAITI – The gangsters bow their heads in prayer, eyes shut. "Jingle Bells" sounds from a cellphone but goes unanswered. They shift positions and clasp hands - loose gold watches clinking, big gold chest medallions swaying, shiny leather shoes shuffling - and mumble "Amen." Tom Hagan, a Catholic priest in a baseball cap, takes it in and grins. "God must be going: 'Whoa! Is that who I think it is down there sending up prayer?'" he jokes. One gang member, Moses, who understands English, laughs out loud. Then he puts on his dark sunglasses and scowls.

For most outsiders, Cité Soleil is a no man's land. Gang violence originating here is blamed for at least 800 dead in the capital of Port-au-Prince so far this year. United Nations forces seldom dare enter. They say the square-mile slum is a base for the kidnappings, rapes, arson, and extortions that are terrorizing the city in the lead-up to elections in November.

Most international aid organizations pulled out of Cité Soleil more than a year ago. "To go in there you basically need commando-style operations," says Damian Onses-Cardona, spokesman for the 8,000-strong UN peacekeeping force.

And then, there is "Father Tom," who visits what is arguably the poorest, most dangerous piece of property in the Western Hemisphere almost daily - with no armed escort. He's accompanied by his two right-hand men - Nelson Jin Liphete and Jonas Fleuriah - and his dog, Douglas.

The name of this slum, resting on Port-au-Prince's beachfront, ironically, means "City of the Sun." But it's a place where shacks are built on mounds of garbage, where entrepreneurs make patties out of mud - spiced with bouillon cubes - to sell as food, pigs slosh around in the sewage, and fires burn in abandoned concrete structures. Ten years ago, half a million people lived there. Today, no one knows. It's a place often described as having no roots, no tomorrow, and no hope.

Or, very little.

Hands Together

A Philadelphia native who spent seven years as Princeton University's chaplain, Father Tom started coming to Haiti in 1986 to do small projects with college students. A few years later, he started "Hands Together," a nonprofit Catholic development and relief organization (handstogether.org). He moved to Haiti in 1995. Today, working with a \$500,000 per year budget in Cité Soleil, he operates a primary school with seven locations, which includes health clinics and feeding centers for students and the elderly.

"Father Tom gives us needed inspiration," says Sen. Mike DeWine (R) of Ohio, a fundraiser and stalwart of Hands Together. The organization has named its Cité Soleil schools in honor of DeWine's daughter, Becky, who died in a car crash.

Working with gangs

Almost daily, Father Tom steers his battered Isuzu four-wheel drive truck past gang checkpoints to inspect the programs, encourage the teachers, scoop up half-naked children in the streets to tell them to go to classes - and meet with the gang leaders.

Soleil 17, Soleil 24, Boston, Belcourt. These are the names of some of the most notorious gangs in the slum. Once or twice a week their leaders, about two dozen men in their mid-20s, screech up in Jeeps - reggae tunes blaring, their security guys with machine guns in the back - to the gate of one of the Hands Together schools and politely greet Father Tom and his staff.

The gangsters then saunter through the school building, passing by crowded classrooms of children doing their ABCs. On the rooftop, overlooking the Caribbean on one side and a sea of squalid shacks on the other, they sit down on low school benches and turn their attention to the business of the day.

The priest hands out bottles of Coca Cola and Sprite - which they open up with their teeth. He feeds them rice and beans. And he updates them on Hands Together's planned activities - a new house-building initiative, an extra nurse for the clinic, a pilot literacy program to start - here and there, quietly, he throws in some sermonizing.

"We want our clinic workers to be safe," he begins. "It will be impossible to feed people without your help. You should be proud of yourselves - proud of what you do for your community," he tells the men, in what might charitably be described as a Philadelphia dialect of Creole.

Critics say Father Tom treats killers as community leaders. "We would be foolish to think we can steer clear of them," he explains. "The gangs are the law here, and so you need to have a relationship with them. You can't work as if in a vacuum."

The last time UN troops entered Cité Soleil was in early July, looking for a top gang leader named Emmanuel "Dread" Wilmer. Mr. Wilmer and other gang members were killed in the ensuing five-hour battle. So, too, were civilians, charges Amaral Duclona, the gangster who has taken Wilmer's place, a pudgy young man with curly hair and a surprisingly shy look in his eyes.

"There are no real police in Haiti today," says Mr. Duclona, who leads the Belcourt gang. "The police have been corrupted by the rich and they all hate us because we are Aristide followers," he says referring to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted in 2004. All efforts to "get something out of this life," he complains to Father Tom, "...are being blocked by those who hate us and those who don't hear us."

"I hear you," says Father Tom, and moves on. "I have a dream that we will get together next week and make a joint proclamation of nonviolence," he says. "I understand you can't just throw your weapons out.... But I think a proclamation of nonviolence would be a good idea," he suggests. "What do you think?"

A few of the gangsters seem to be listening. One claps. The majority look bored. Evans Jean, leader of the Boston gang, a lithe man with two gold front teeth, who is rumored to have beheaded a man last month, gets up to talk on his mobile phone.

Different from Princeton

"Sure it's different from Princeton," says Father Tom, reinventing the meaning of understatement. "But not as different as you might think." Young people have a lot in common, he insists, taking off his glasses and rubbing his eyes: People are intrinsically good. People have senses of humor and people want to see the beauty in life.

In fact, muses Father Tom, sometimes those with the vantage point of a garbage dump manage to see more beauty around them than those in ivory towers. "People at the Ivy Leagues sometimes take themselves too seriously," he says, pointing out that during his time at Princeton there were several suicides. "Here, I have not seen anyone give up and kill themselves.

"I believe you have many things in common with those you think are your enemies, those you call the bourgeoisie," Father Tom tells the gangsters. "If you look into their hearts and minds they have the same sadness and frustrations you do. They don't know you, right. But you don't know them, either." He "begs," them, he says, "to see good in people and take responsibility," for their actions.

Does the message get through? The priest shrugs. He is the first to admit it's an everyday struggle. A dozen Hands Together staff members have been murdered over the years. Eight students in his schools have also died violently, including one hacked to death with a machete. The 2-year-old daughter of his assistant Jin Liphete was shot to death by gunmen who came looking for her father when he wasn't home.

Mr. Liphete used to live in Cité Soleil. When he made enough money, he moved out, never thinking he would come back.

"It's a job, first of all," he says, explaining the motivation to work for Hands Together. "And also," he admits, "When you see Father Tom doing so much for the people, and he's not even from here ... it gets you thinking," he says.

"This is my country sinking," concludes Liphete, as the gangsters get up and slap each other high-fives before heading out. "So, I'm thinking: Maybe I should do something too."

- Ms. Harman is Latin America bureau chief for the Monitor and USA Today.

Reporters on the Job
Christian Science Monitor

• **First Impressions: Many journalists in Haiti want to visit Cité Soleil - one of the most violent slums in the Western hemisphere - but don't know how, given the security concerns, says reporter Danna Harman. When she serendipitously met an Irish priest who works in Soleil, she jumped at the chance to go with him to get today's story.**

In the Monitor
Wednesday, 10/05/05

"I felt comfortable going with Father Tom because everyone knows him there," Danna says. But on the road, it's less clear who's who, and highway robberies are common. "We drove in the first day, and I was chatting, sitting in the back seat. Suddenly a guy in the middle of the road raises his arm and shoots. I got down and someone fell on top of me."

The gunman, it seems, was aiming elsewhere. Everyone was safe, and they pressed on. When Danna got up, she realized it was Father Tom who had fallen on her - prompting his two assistants to upbraid him. "They were scolding Father Tom for giving me a bad impression of the neighborhood by acting so frightened," says Danna. She adds: "It was sort of sweet, actually."

Speaking of first impressions, Danna must have made a strange one when she first met Father Tom.

She had an appointment with a man named Tom Braak who works in Haiti as a missionary. "Addresses are notoriously complicated in Port-au-Prince, and phone connections are even worse. So, my driver and I found ourselves searching the back alleys and asking everyone if they knew Father Tom, a 'white man.' Finally, we reached a door. Inside is an Irish Catholic priest named Tom. I say 'Hi,' and we sit down and start talking about his work. In a few moments I realize this is indeed a Father Tom, but not the one I have been corresponding with!"

Ben Arnoldy
Asia editor

Haiti Elections May be Postponed
By VOA News
01 October 2005

An election official in Haiti says the country may have to postpone elections scheduled for November.

Patrick Fequiere says authorities need more time to prepare ballots, distribute voter identification cards and set up polling places.

The election council member's comments come three days after U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Haitian officials to speed up preparations for the November 20 vote.

The nine-member council has approved about 30 presidential candidates for the first round of balloting. The country will also hold legislative elections.

The vote will be Haiti's first since former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled the country during a 2004 uprising. About 7,000 U.N. peacekeepers have been deployed to calm widespread violence in Haiti.

Some information for this report provided by AP and Reuters.

Haiti facing second election delay

San Jose Mercury News

PREPARATIONS MAY TAKE UNTIL DECEMBER OR JANUARY, OFFICIALS SAY

October 1, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) -- Haiti is struggling to organize its Nov. 20 elections and may have to postpone the balloting for a second time, an elections official said Friday.

Patrick Fequiere, one of nine members of the Provisional Electoral Council, said it may be necessary to delay the first round of the elections until late December or January to give authorities time to prepare ballots, distribute voter-identification cards and set up polling sites.

The vote would be the first since a rebellion in February 2004 during which President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country.

``The electoral calendar is too tight," Fequiere said. ``I'm convinced we will have to postpone."

He said it might also be necessary for the United Nations and the Organization of American States, which are already providing assistance, to step in and manage the vote because the electoral council lacks enough trained staff and equipment.

The balloting for president and 129 legislative seats was originally scheduled for Nov. 16, but was postponed to give the country more time to prepare.

IRC Expresses Concern for Haitian Refugees in the Dominican Republic and Caribbean Region
International Rescue Committee
October 3, 2005

The IRC and partner groups say the United States and Dominican governments need to vastly improve policies toward Haitian refugees and take steps to increase protection of the most vulnerable.

In February, representatives from the IRC, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and Brown Medical School traveled to the Dominican Republic to assess protection and humanitarian needs of Haitian refugees living there.

In a report on their findings, delegation members say there is currently no meaningful protection for Haitian refugees in the Dominican Republic or Caribbean region. The report says Haitian refugee women and children in particular require critical attention, as they are especially vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation. The report also notes there is limited access to preventative healthcare services and treatment for Haitians in the region, a fact that represents a public health concern, particularly with regard to infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

"The United States needs to take active steps to address the urgent protection needs of Haitians," says Abigail Price, the IRC's national immigration director and co-author of the report, which warns that, "The continued degradation of the political and economic situation in Haiti could quickly result in an outflow of refugees."

Among a series of recommendations issued, the delegation calls on the United States government to increase its support of UNHCR efforts to build asylum-processing capacity in the region.

It also appeals to the Dominican government to prevent human rights abuses against Haitian asylum seekers, expeditiously consider pending asylum claims and establish a legitimate and timely adjudication process for future claims that may be filed.

In addition, the delegation urges that Haitian refugees be designated Temporary Protected Status (TPS), that deportations back to Haiti cease and that Haitians in the Caribbean become eligible for the United States Refugee Admissions Program.

The mission to the Dominican Republic was planned in response to ongoing civil and political unrest in Haiti and in anticipation of presidential elections to be held in Haiti in November 2005.

To read the full report, [click here](#).

New PM Urges Haitians to Unite
Addis Tribune, Ethiopia
October 3, 2005

Haiti's new prime minister has called for national reconciliation and an end to the dictatorships of the past after arriving back from exile.

Gerard Latortue, a former foreign minister and UN official, was appointed to form a transition government and organise fresh elections.

In the aftermath of the successful rebellion against President Aristide, he said disarmament was essential.

The UN has warned Haitian children are at grave risk of hunger and disease.

And the security situation remains unsettled with US marines saying they had shot dead two armed men in the capital Port-au-Prince after coming under fire on Wednesday.

"The security problem is out of hand. Disarmament is imperative," said Mr Latortue, describing himself as a man of "compromise and unification".

He said he hoped the foreign peacekeepers would help retrain local police to "depoliticise them and make them more professional".

The new PM said he would consider re-establishing the army, dissolved by the ousted president in 1995 after human rights abuses.

Mr Latortue has lived in the US since 1988 but was nominated to be prime minister by a group of eminent Haitians earlier this week.

Arms hunt

Meanwhile, Unicef, the UN's children's agency, said thousands were in need of medical attention.

The deputy director of its emergency programme, Eric Laroche, said many children had died of pneumonia or diarrhoea following the armed uprising against President Aristide, who left the country at the end of February.

Mr Aristide, now in the Central African Republic, is threatening legal action against the US and France, accusing them of abducting him and forcing him into exile.

Armed Aristide supporters say they will revolt against any attempt to erase the legacy of the man they still consider their leader.

But US marines said they were launching a joint operation with Haitian police to take weapons from armed groups.

Marines Col Charles Gurganus told reporters in the capital, Port-au-Prince, that his men and the Haitian national police would "disarm men who are illegally armed" in public.

He called on Haitians to hand in weapons and pass on the names of those holding illegal arms.

The BBC's Daniel Lak in Port-au-Prince says the operation could bring the marines into conflict with Haiti's militias, especially supporters of ex-President Aristide. (BBC)

Haitian Rebels Ordered to Disarm
Addis Tribune, Ethiopia
October 3, 2005

The leader of Haiti's rebel movement, Guy Philippe, has ordered his fighters to lay down their arms.

Mr Philippe said he made the decision after international security forces promised to ensure public safety.

The BBC correspondent in Haiti says US soldiers sent to restore order after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled have stepped up their presence.

Increasing numbers of US marines have begun patrolling the capital Port-au-Prince and aid is beginning to arrive.

A plane chartered by the UN children's agency (Unicef) arrived on Wednesday, bringing 30 tons of medical supplies.

The situation is said to be particularly bad in the north, where the rebels have held sway for several weeks.

"There are areas we haven't been able to access for months," said Unicef spokeswoman Marixie Mercado, initially because of floods and then because of the political turmoil.

Oxfam calculates at least 80,000 people in Port-de-Paix and 60,000 in Cap Haitien have no access to clean water.

Aid workers are warning that security must be restored to allow the distribution of urgently needed supplies.

Mr Philippe agreed to order the disarmament after receiving a reassurance that the US troops gathered in Haiti would guarantee the protection of the Haitian people.

US marines are securing key sites including the airport, port and presidential palace, but their mission has now expanded "to protect Haitians from reprisal attacks", according to Staff Sergeant Timothy Edwards.

"Now there are foreign troops promising to protect the Haitian people...we will lay down our arms," Mr Philippe, who has declared himself the country's military chief, told a news conference in Port-au-Prince.

His comments are an abrupt change from Tuesday when he said he would take charge of Haiti's military and threatened to arrest the prime minister, saying he had a "moral duty" to ensure peace.

Haiti demands our attention

Written by Dan Freeman-Maloy - Contributor

Excalibur Online, York University, Canada

Wednesday, 28 September 2005

This past Sept. 9, two independent journalists in Haiti - Kevin Pina and Jean Ristil - were arrested by the country's unelected and highly repressive government. The arrests were carried out by the Haitian National Police (PNH) and other Canadian police personnel in Haiti. Following a disturbing trend, mainstream Canadian media published no mention of these journalists' incarceration. Nonetheless, the campaign of repression that saw them arrested requires our close attention and scrutiny.

Thanks in large part to Canada's corporate media, few in this country know about the crimes being committed in Haiti. The arrest of journalists is indeed only the tip of the iceberg. On Aug. 21, machete-wielding paramilitaries joined the PNH in killing upwards of 50 people attending a soccer game sponsored by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). On July 6, UN forces in Haiti themselves carried out a brutal assault, attacking the impoverished community of Cite Soleil with tanks and 300-400 troops backed by helicopter gunships.

The arrests of Pina and Ristil, then, should be understood both as part of a broader campaign of repression, and as an attack on independent journalists who are risking their lives to expose it.

We would all do well to inform ourselves about this campaign and counter attempts to conceal it. For his part, Pina works with the Haiti Information Project (HIP), an organization which has produced material that is very helpful in this respect. Much of it is online. It is also releasing a film directed by Pina, Haiti: The UNTold Story, which is scheduled to be shown at York's Nat Taylor Cinema on Sept. 28, at 4pm.

Informing ourselves about Haitian politics is not simply a matter of intellectual interest, much less one of charity, and by doing nothing about it we lend these policies our tacit approval.

Overwhelmingly, the targets of this repression are supporters of Haiti's Fanmi Lavalas political party. Until Feb. 29, 2004, Lavalas members filled most of the Haitian government's elected posts. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, then the country's elected president, was himself a key founder of the Lavalas movement. The composition of the government reflected the party's unrivalled popularity amongst Haiti's poor, black majority. This was the base that swept the Aristide government to power in the elections of 2000. That Lavalas is the country's most popular political formation was confirmed by Gallup polls conducted in both 2000 and 2002.

On Feb. 29, however, this government was overthrown. Aristide was too accountable to his base of impoverished supporters, his government too independent from the demands of Western governments, multinational corporations and Haiti's wealthy elite. And so US forces kidnapped Aristide and sent him into exile, as Canadian troops secured the airport in Haiti's capital, capping off a project of destabilization against the government that had begun years before.

Haiti was the world's first black republic, its 1804 declaration of independence from France achieved through slave revolt. On Mar. 3, 2004 - a mere 200 years later - an editorial in The Observer

(Jamaica's leading newspaper) explained that a "Western troika" comprised of Canada, the US and France had subverted this independence and given "the democratic system a good, hard and painful kick in the teeth".

About a year and a half later, the kicks and blows to Haitian democracy continue. Nonetheless, facing imprisonment and assassination, Haitians continue to take to the streets to press their demands. It is up to those of us in Canada to investigate our government's policies, and consider following suit.

**Democracy denied: Vancouver International Film Festival features documentary on Haiti's
Endless Revolution**

September 27, 2005

Derrick O'Keefe

Seven Oaks Magazine

Recently, I had a telling exchange with a young man enraged at hearing local anti-war activists condemning the role of the Canadian armed forces in places like Afghanistan and Haiti. Responding to my point that our government had helped to overthrow a democratically elected president in Haiti last year, he retorted that the problems in Haiti were due to “all those Hutus and Tutus [sic].”

This widespread ignorance about Haiti – as captured so perfectly in this bungling conflation of the western hemisphere's poorest nation with Rwanda – could indeed be funny, were its consequences not so tragic. Under the cover of a collective lack of awareness, the government of Canada, together with France and the United States, has trampled upon democracy and human rights in Haiti.

A few precious voices, though, have been working overtime to reveal the grisly reality of Haiti today, now under UN occupation in the wake of a February 29, 2004 coup d'état. Nicolas Rossier's new documentary, *Aristide and the Endless Revolution*, featured at the upcoming Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF), marks an important contribution to the struggle to disseminate the truth about Haiti's hard struggle for self-determination.

Despite its name, *Aristide* is not a hagiography. It does follow, chronologically, the life and times of the predominant figure in the short life of Haitian democracy. Jean-Bertrand Aristide was a young, charismatic Catholic priest who emerged as the leader of the poor masses at the time of the long-overdue disintegration of the Duvalier dictatorship in the 1980s. In 1990, he won a landslide victory in unprecedented free elections. The spectre of popular democracy instituting social reforms, however, was too threatening to the country's tiny, decadent and arrogant elite. Within seven months, in collaboration with the Bush Sr. regime in the United States, Aristide was ousted in a coup d'état. Re-installed in 1994, and re-elected in 2000 after sitting out a term (Haiti's constitution does not allow consecutive presidential terms), Aristide was again ousted by force in 2004.

Rossier's film assembles an impressive cast of both Haitian and international commentators, with the aim of explaining the real motivations behind the 2004 coup, and revealing to the world the horrific conditions of day-to-day life under occupation today. Familiar faces of the U.S. Left, such as Noam Chomsky and Danny Glover, speak eloquently to the long continuity of efforts to crush the Haitian people, who made the first successful slave revolution in 1804. Aristide's U.S. lawyer, Ira Kurzban, is featured, explaining a number of the causes of the Washington-Paris-Ottawa coup of 2004; among other displays of pique and independence, the Haitian president had begun a high profile campaign seeking \$21 billion in reparations from France for unfair colonial debts – a dangerous precedent to say the least in a world still divided between imperial centres and indebted neo-colonies.

Aristide does give face time to some of the latest coup's staunch defenders, and to former friends of Haiti's president-in-exile. The despicable Roger Noriega is given his turn – and just enough rope – to try and blame Aristide for the disastrous human rights situation that followed his own overthrow. An

extended segment of the film, too, deals with the controversy around the 2000 elections that has been used to discredit Aristide's democratic mandate.

Perhaps the most powerful moments in the film are in its heart-wrenching footage of contemporary Haiti, and of life in the poor neighbourhoods. The Haitian National Police (HNP) have been, according to numerous independent reports, been committing massacres and abuses with impunity, often targeting militants and supporters of Aristide's Lavalas Party. Canada's RCMP, we should all take note, has played a leading role in training the HNP.

A memorable, haunting scene near the end of the documentary features an interview with an emaciated, destitute man in one of Port-au-Prince's slums crawling with UN forces. Explaining that the poor were better off with Aristide in power, he vows to resist, and not to hide his political sympathies, no matter the cost, "I'd rather sleep in the morgue than here in the streets."

With the Canadian government playing a central role in negating Haitian democracy, *Aristide and the Endless Revolution* is a film that should be seen and discussed. Many of the titles at this year's VIFF can broaden our understanding of the world, and of others' realities. Few, however, will match *Aristide* in calling forth urgent political action.

-*Aristide and the Endless Revolution* premieres at the film festival Friday, September 30, 8:45pm, at the Granville5, with director Nicolas Rossier in attendance.

Further showings are Saturday, Oct 1, 1:40pm, Granville5 and Monday, Oct 10, 10:00am, Pacific Cinémathèque. See the Film Festival's website at www.viff.org/viff05/index05.html for more details.

Seething in Haiti

Part 1: The Screaming Suit

by Kevin Pina

A 3 part special to the Haiti Information Project (HIP)

Haiti Information Project

September 30, 2005

A few people have said and written that I was released from a Haitian jail on Sept. 12 because of the privilege of my skin color and my holding a valid US passport. I won't deny these privileges, which I continue to use as leverage to tell the story of Haiti's killing fields, but it should be known that the judge who ordered me arrested on Sept. 9 did so precisely because I was white and a US citizen. In his mind my presence was a challenge to his authority and threatened to expose an arbitrary and politically motivated search of Father Gerard Jean-Juste's residence at the parish of St. Claire's church. I was using my privilege against him when I thrust my press pass in his direction and claimed the right to report on his activities. He made his intentions clear after calling me a "terrorist" and a "white bandit" finally concluding, "I am going to show you that this is my country, this is Haiti. I am going to make an example out of you to teach you I am the law here. Handcuff him!"

After the screaming suit in Jean-Juste's residence refused to make his identity known, it wasn't until I was sharing a dirty and smelly cell with 12 other people that I learned he is one of the most powerful judges in Haiti. Judge Jean Pérs Paul is the president of the National Judge's Association of Haiti spawned by the International Federation of Electoral Systems (IFES) and heavily funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). IFES formed several such "professional" organizations as part of the campaign to destabilize the constitutional government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and legitimize his forced ouster on February 29, 2004.

I have since tried to understand the judge's reaction and the role of the cadre of other anonymous judges that are responsible for incarcerating and keeping a good number of folks affiliated with the Lavalas party in jails throughout Haiti today. You see not many people really knew who Judge Pérs Paul was and his role in Jean-Juste's case until he locked me up on Sept. 9. Since then, you can see the likes of JACQUELINE CHARLES of the Miami Herald spinning furiously to cast the judge in a positive light and as a magistrate merely caught in the maze of an antiquated and outdated system. Unfortunately, she doesn't know the half of it.

A strong case can be made that Judge Pérs Paul's threats to "teach me a lesson" reflect one of the fundamental psychological dysfunctions of those behind the coup and who are now responsible for the relentless campaign to persecute Aristide's Lavalas party. While the good judge knows the reality is that foreigners are running his country, he uses his judicial authority to persecute Lavalas, specifically Father Jean-Juste, as a way of proving to himself that he still has some power and control. Judge Pérs Paul and many others in the ranks of the executive and judicial branches of the US-installed government of Gerard Latortue compensate for this sense of powerlessness and degraded national pride by pursuing a relentless political witch-hunt against Lavalas. Pérs Paul knows that at the end of the day the US embassy can yank his chain and so he directs his vicious and petty brand of justice against those his masters have deemed to be the enemy and fair game. This is much in the same way he treated me as a threat to his authority by my mere presence and by making it clear that in his mind his authority is absolute and trumps any rights of the press in Haiti. The word megalomaniac certainly

comes to mind. But I get ahead of myself, let's return to the events of that fateful week in September that me led to this insight and a three day lockup, courtesy of Judge Pérs Paul, in one of Haiti's most infamous jails.

On September 9, I was shopping at the Olympic Market in Petion-Ville when I glanced up to see the beaming face of none other than Jodel Chamblain who had recently been released from prison. Chamblain was the second in command of the CIA-trained paramilitary death squad known as the Front for Advancement and Progress in Haiti (FRAPH). While the Haitian judicial system incarcerates priests and former officials of the Lavalas government on flimsy and manufactured charges, Chamblain was allowed to walk. His release was for many the ultimate proof that Haiti's current judicial system is one of the most highly politicized in Haitian history. Now here was this convicted killer, recognizing me from my many visits to the Petion-Ville jail to see Lavalas political prisoner Annette Auguste, smiling in my direction in search of recognition. I ignored him but quietly seethed at his presence knowing that while he perused the produce section, people I consider to be much better human beings were languishing and rotting away in jail cells throughout Haiti.

After paying for my groceries and loading them into the car I headed towards home, the ice was already beginning to melt in the afternoon heat. It was about 3 pm when I received a frantic call. I was told that the police were searching Father Gerard Jean-Juste's residence and that they feared they were going to try to plant weapons to justify keeping him in prison. I explained my ice was melting and I was nearly home but the pleading voice on the other end finally convinced me to turn the car around and head to Ti Place Cazeau where Jean-Juste's parish is located. I was already in a foul mood following my earlier encounter with Chamblain when I arrived to see a police vehicle parked outside of the church. Two SWAT cops dressed in black with guns drawn eyed me suspiciously as I began filming them and the license plate of their vehicle. They said nothing but their harsh stares spoke volumes as I headed into the church.

Now you've got to understand that the Haitian judiciary and their lackeys in the police like to work in secret and don't really appreciate the concept of a free and independent press. All you have to do is ask the family of Abdias Jean, a Miami radio journalist summarily executed by the Haitian police on Jan. 14, 2005 in the neighborhood of Cite de Dieu. Jean made the fatal error of stumbling upon and witnessing the murder of three young boys the police were questioning concerning the whereabouts of vagabonds and Lavalas bandits. The police then chased Jean down, beat him to a pulp and ended his journalistic career with a single shot to the head. To this day no one in the police has been held accountable despite several eyewitnesses who risked their lives by coming forward. You see the Haitian judiciary NEVER investigates allegations of crimes committed by the Haitian police instead reserving their energy for Catholic priests and anyone associated with Lavalas. For all I knew anyone of these cops outside the church could be cut from the same cloth as Abdias Jean's executioners, the probability was high and I became nervous as the sounds of loud rustling and things breaking inside of the presbytery and residence of Father Jean-Juste grew louder. It was at that moment that the seething memory of a smiling and liberated Chamblain collided with my memories of the spirited and jailed priest suffocating in a jail cell tormented by the fact that he knows he's innocent. I braced myself and decided, that for better or for worse, I was going to get into the presbytery with my camera and cover the event.

Area politicians keeping money from DeLay

Inside Washington

By Malia Rulon

Cincinnati Enquirer

INSIDE WASHINGTON

Malia Rulon covers Washington news for the Enquirer.

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DeWine visits Haiti with Rice

DeWine joined Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on a trip to Haiti last Tuesday to show U.S. support for the Caribbean country's elections on Nov. 20 - the first since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in February 2004.

The United States has spent nearly \$400 million in electoral and other assistance to Haiti since then, including sending in troops to keep the peace.

By the way, this is the kind of foreign aid that Reps. Schmidt and Chabot say should be cut to pay for costs associated with Hurricane Katrina.

DeWine, who has made more than a dozen trips to Haiti in recent years, is urging Congress to pass his trade assistance bill to help create jobs in Haiti.

Report on Sept.30 Haiti Solidarity Actions
by Dave Welsh and Shirley Pate
Saturday, Oct. 01, 2005
sub@sonic.net
San Francisco Independent Media

Bulletin #3 - Initial Report on Sept. 30 actions First reports on local actions - International Day of Solidarity with the Haitian People in 44 countries

1. San Francisco sit-in -- 18 arrested as Haiti solidarity activists block entrances to Federal Bldg.

A crowd of over 75 people rallied at 8:00 a.m. Friday at the Federal Building. Many sat down and blocked entrances to the building, chanting and singing -- in a protest against the US government's role in the February 29, 2004 coup d'etat and continued US backing for the coup regime, and for massacres and repression in Haiti.

At one point all the entrances to the Federal Building were blocked. Eighteen were arrested by federal police; they were released later in the day and ordered to appear in court on charges of "failure to obey lawful directions of federal police."

2. Washington DC protest outside Haitian Embassy -- Large photos of coup victims cause traffic jams

A lively group of demonstrators gathered in front of the Haitian Embassy today as part of the 44 city protest comemorating the 14th anniversary of the 1991 coup d'etat against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Haiti's illegal Ambassador, Raymond Joseph, was just arriving as we approached the front of the embassy. We greeted him with a myriad of chants and he disappeared inside. Later we delivered to the embassy a copy of the International Declaration of Solidarity with the People of Haiti.

We obtained numerous graphic photos of Haitian victims of both the Haitian National Police and the UN "peacekeeping" troops (our thanks to Katharine Kean) and displayed them during our protest. The response was overwhelming. Cars slowed down, oven causing traffic jams, to look at the pictures and read our signs. Motorists blew their horns in support for nearly three hours. - Washington Report by Shirley Pate

PLEASE SEND REPORTS OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN IN YOUR CITY OR TOWN to
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Canada's Michaelle Jean was Haitian Refugee

By Phil Couvrette

Associated Press

ABC News

Sept. 27, 2005

MONTREAL Sep 27, 2005 — Queen Elizabeth II's new representative in Canada is a refugee from Haiti the first black and only the third woman to hold the title of governor general.

Michaelle Jean, 48, is also one of the youngest to hold the office, the highest in Canada's constitutional order. It is a sensitive if largely ceremonial post, dedicated to promoting a national identity for a vast country with deep political and linguistic fault lines.

"I have come a long way," she said ahead of her swearing-in Tuesday. "My ancestors were slaves, they fought for freedom. I was born in Haiti, the poorest country in our hemisphere. I am a daughter of exiles driven from their home by a dictatorial regime."

EU Opens Membership Talks With Turkey

U.S. GIs Seek to Retake Western Iraq Towns

Hurricane Stan strikes Mexico

Her critics claim she is a token and a pawn, picked by Prime Minister Paul Martin to boost slipping support for federalism and his Liberal Party in Quebec. Some say she should have been disqualified from the position because of her alleged ties to Quebec's separatist movement.

Martin has stood by her, calling her a talented woman who will bring fresh perspective to Rideau Hall, the governor general's residence in Ottawa.

"Born in Haiti, she knows what it is to come to a new country with little more than hope," Martin said when he announced her appointment in August. Jean's family fled the brutal regime of dictator Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier in Haiti when she was 11.

"She is a reflection of that great quality of Canada, a country which focuses on equality of opportunity," he said. "She reflects what we are and what we want to be."

Haitian immigrants have been rejoicing in Quebec the French-speaking province that is now home to 100,000 immigrants or descendants of the Caribbean nation. Other immigrants see Jean, the 27th governor general, as a symbol of what they or their children can hope to achieve in this multicultural nation.

Though once a British subject, the governor general who is also commander in chief of the Canadian Forces has been Canadian since 1952.

Bills passed in Parliament do not become law until the governor general gives them so-called royal assent, but this is done on the advice of the prime minister and his Cabinet and rarely does the governor general dissent.

Rice tells Haiti to speed up election plans

By Sue Fleming

Reuters

Washington Post

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Haiti's interim government, struggling to contain political and criminal violence, to speed up planning for November's elections and urged citizens to get out and vote.

In a one-day visit to Haiti on Tuesday under heavy security, Rice met interim President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and expressed concern over planning for the November 20 legislative and presidential elections.

"In my conversations today, I noted that all Haitians must accelerate preparations for the elections. These elections must be open and inclusive and fair," Rice said at a joint news conference in the Haitian capital with Latortue.

The legislative and presidential elections are the first in Haiti since ex-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was driven into exile on February 29, 2004, partly due to U.S. pressure after a bloody uprising in the poorest country in the Americas.

Haiti, run by an interim government backed by the United States, is still plagued by violence in which hundreds have been killed despite the presence of more than 7,000 U.N. peacekeepers and police.

The Bush administration, which encouraged Aristide to step down in 2004 and flew him out of the country as rebels encircled the capital, has invested political capital and millions of dollars in a fair outcome of the elections -- despite Haiti's record of corruption at the ballot box.

Rice, who visited a voter registration center, said there needed to be more polling places established and greater efforts made in the registration of poll workers. In addition, the electoral calendar needed to be finalized, she said, and a new government installed by February.

Latortue said his government shared the same concerns as the United States and was working hard to rectify any problems. He said his government was committed to having a government in place by February 7, 2006, as mandated by the constitution.

Rice, who later visited a rustic voter registration center, urged Haitians to use their democratic right to vote in the election. "There is no more powerful weapon in the hands of citizens than the power to vote," said Rice.

One former Haitian political force not on the ballot is ousted leader Aristide, who is in exile in South Africa. But several members of his Lavalas party have registered to be on the ballot.

"The international community is of one mind that it would not be a good idea for Mr. Aristide to return," said Rice of Aristide, whom she said should stay in South Africa.

Asked whether he thought Aristide should be allowed to return to Haiti, Latortue said he had no ill-feelings toward anyone but did not comment directly.

Rice also urged Haiti to resolve the cases of Aristide supporters and Cabinet members who have long been jailed but were only recently charged with crimes, or are still awaiting formal charges.

"Justice has to come in a timely fashion," Rice said. "These high-profile cases should be resolved quickly."

Rice flew on a heavily armed U.N. helicopter from the Port-au-Prince airport to the presidential palace to meet officials of the interim government installed after Aristide's departure. She flew over sprawling, dusty slums before landing on a lush lawn on the palace grounds.

Security was tight for Rice's trip, which is aimed at showing Haiti's importance to Washington. U.N. soldiers in armored troop carriers and U.S. security forces were stationed outside the palace.

A congressional delegation joined Rice on her trip to Haiti. Ohio Republican Sen. Mike DeWine said the United States needed to show its commitment to Haiti but he was realistic about the country's prospects.

"Haiti is full of disappointments," DeWine told reporters on route to Haiti aboard Rice's plane.

The United States gave \$174.4 million to Haiti in 2004 and has promised \$205 million this year.

Rice Implores Haitians to Hold Elections

By GEORGE GEDDA

The Associated Press

Washington Post

Tuesday, September 27, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Tuesday that Haitian authorities must move more quickly to prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections set for Nov. 20.

Rice called the elections a potential "new start" for Haiti as the country tries to overcome two decades of democratic failure accompanied by widespread political violence.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, is welcomed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington, Monday, Sept. 26, 2005. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta) (Manuel Balce Ceneta - AP) She met with Haiti's interim leadership, President Bonaface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, at the presidential palace after a helicopter trip over the area, where she could see row after row of ramshackle housing, evidence of Haiti's underdevelopment.

"Elections can be a very important and precious step along the road to democracy," Rice told a news conference with Latortue at her side. Calling the vote a "powerful weapon," she urged Haitians to exercise it in November.

Thirty candidates for president have been approved by the country's electoral commission. About 700 candidates have registered for legislative elections.

Rice said Haitian authorities must accelerate the pace of electoral preparations, including the selection of sites for polling places and registration of electoral workers. She urged Haiti to take advantage of electoral services offered by the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Latortue said he shared her concerns.

The elections are the first since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced from office in February 2004 during a revolt against his rule. The Bush administration has provided almost \$400 million in electoral and other assistance to Haiti since early 2004 and almost \$200 million is budgeted for 2006. U.S. troops were sent here in the aftermath of Aristide's departure and remained in Haiti until U.N. peacekeepers were deployed in June 2004.

The Brazilian-led force, which also includes significant contributions from Argentina and Chile now numbers 7,600.

Repeated efforts to install stable constitutional rule in Haiti have failed over the years but the United States, with a big assist from U.N. peacekeepers, is eager to see the country turn a corner this time.

The State Department did not announce Rice's trip until less than 24 hours before her early morning departure Tuesday, a sign of uneasiness about the potential for violence during her visit.

When former Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled to Haiti 10 months ago, gunfire erupted outside the presidential palace not long after he arrived there for talks. It was not clear whether the violence was related to his visit.

Politically motivated violence has erupted frequently in Haiti since Aristide's departure. Haitian authorities hold Aristide's supporters largely responsible. But police operations in pro-Aristide neighborhoods have often turned deadly. Aristide is living in exile in South Africa.

The 15-nation Caribbean Community suspended Haiti's membership shortly after Aristide fled the island during last year's revolt. The Caribbean Community maintains the post-Aristide government is unconstitutional.

Aristide's supporters contend that the United States forced him from office. The administration says he left voluntarily.

Rice gives support to Haiti

Secretary of State Rice traveled to Haiti ahead of a crucial presidential election in a nation long plagued by political strife.

By PABLO BACHELET

pbachelet@herald.com

Miami Herald

Sept. 27, 2005

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is visiting Haiti today, just eight weeks before a scheduled presidential election that Washington hopes will help put the country on the path to democratic stability.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Rice wants to show U.S. support for the Nov. 20 balloting to elect a successor to Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted in a bloody revolt in February 2004.

"It is a Haitian process, but also she wants to go down there and see what progress that they have made and [she] can urge them to make continued progress as they come up on the elections," McCormack said.

This is Rice's first visit to Haiti since she took over in January. Colin Powell, her predecessor, was in Haiti in December, when gunshots rang out outside the presidential palace in Port-au-Prince as he met inside with political leaders.

Miami Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Republican, and Kendrick Meek, a Democrat, and Ohio Republican Sen. Mike DeWine confirmed they will accompany Rice.

The visit comes as Haiti enters the final stretch before the election, in which at least 32 candidates will vie for the presidency. If no candidate wins a majority, a runoff is set for Jan. 3.

Analysts question whether the U.S.-backed interim administration that succeeded Aristide has either the political backbone or the technical capability to pull off the election at a time when parts of the capital are still controlled by armed gangs.

Mark Schneider, who tracks Haitian issues with the International Crisis Group, said Rice's visit comes at an "absolutely crucial" moment for the interim government and that Rice should "spur actions that would make elections fair."

This includes urging the government to sack police officers accused of human-rights abuses, releasing leaders of Aristide's Lavalas Family Party detained on allegedly flimsy charges, and disarming former members of the armed forces and pro-Aristide gangs.

"The United States has been saying the right things but they haven't made them happen," Schneider said. "Time is just simply running out."

Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council has a tall task before it. It must staff and equip 10 district offices as well as 155 communal ones, a massive undertaking for a nation that has been ravaged by poverty and political strife for decades.

Rice planned to meet with interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and other government officials, and visit an election registration site.

Rice discussed the situation in Haiti on Monday during a working lunch with Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim. The U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti headed by Brazil has been criticized for not acting aggressively enough to disarm the gangs.

But U.S. officials have been issuing a more upbeat assessment of the security situation in Haiti. McCormack said the "environment has become increasingly secure" in Haiti, although there are "still pockets of real difficulty."

DeWine has had a long interest in Haiti and has presented bills to give Haiti more economic assistance. Meek's northern Miami district is home to 127,000 Haitians, the largest concentration in the United States. Ros-Lehtinen is an influential member of the House International Relations Committee.

Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa, has blamed the United States for his ouster, a charge Washington denies.

Rice Advocates Open Elections in Haiti

By Amelia Shaw

VOA News

Port-au-Prince

27 September 2005

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveled to Port-au-Prince Tuesday to talk with the Haiti's interim government about the upcoming national elections.

Traveling with a small group of congressmen, Secretary Rice visited , President Boniface Alexandre, and members of the U.N. peacekeeping force, MINUSTAH. The U.S. delegation also toured a voter registration center in the capital.

In a news conference at the National Palace today, Secretary Rice said her visit was a show of support to the Haitian people during their electoral process. She urged all Haitians to work together to ensure the legitimacy of the national elections this coming November. "In my conversations today I noted that all Haitians must accelerate preparations for the elections. I underscored also that the elections must be open and inclusive and fair," she said.

The Haitian Provisional Elections Commission, known locally as the CEP, has been working with U.N. officials in preparation for the vote. Major problems, such as bad roads, lack of electricity and civil unrest, have kept many Haitians from registering. So far, 2.6 million people have registered to vote in a country where as many as four million are eligible.

Government critics from the former ruling party, Lavalas, claim many of the delays and complications are intentional and aimed at excluding them from power.

But Prime Minister Latortue says the government is non-partisan, and wants to hold open elections in which everyone can participate. He says his government is ready to welcome the next president, and pass the reins of power to him. He says there have been some technical problems, but the government is working hard to solve them. He says the elections will be held on time and the transfer of power will take place next February.

Secretary Rice underscored the role of the international community in providing security and technical expertise to ensure free and fair elections. In her comments, she urged the Haitian people to take charge of their future, and go to the polls. "Mr. Prime Minister, throughout history people have fought for the right to vote. There is no weapon more powerful in the hands of a citizen than the vote. And so to the people of Haiti, I urge you to use that powerful weapon - the vote - in the days ahead," she said.

So far, there are 32 presidential candidates on the ballot. The election campaign will officially open in early October.

Haiti: Priest jailed legally

Despite the protest of Amnesty International, Haitian authorities claim a jailed Roman Catholic priest and former Miami activist is being legally detained.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

Sept. 29, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Haitian authorities say the Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste is jailed legally and not as the result of a political vendetta against supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest who ran the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, has steadfastly denied all the charges against him. Amnesty International has designated him a prisoner of conscience.

The popular priest was first arrested Oct. 13 on charges of inciting violence against the state, based on allegations that he used his church to plot the interim government's ouster. He was freed on his own recognizance 48 days later.

Jean-Juste supporters have claimed that case was closed by the first investigative judge assigned to it, Jean-Sénat Fleury, for lack of evidence. Fleury resigned to run in the Nov. 20 presidential election.

But the case remains open, said Jean Pérs Paul, the investigative judge now in charge of all cases against Jean-Juste.

Jean-Juste was arrested again on July 21, this time on charges of complicity in the murder of prominent journalist Jacques Roche and causing a public clamor.

Roche was kidnapped July 10 and was found shot to death five days later in what some Haitians believed was the work of pro-Aristide gunmen. Jean-Juste turned up at the funeral, claiming to be a relative, and was attacked by the crowd.

Days later, Jean-Juste also was charged with illegal possession of weapons. Paul said the charge stemmed from his admission that he had received five guns from the Aristide government.

But Paul acknowledged that Jean-Juste claimed he does not know the current whereabouts of the guns, and that a search of his St. Claire three weeks ago turned up nothing.

Defense lawyer Mario Joseph has a different version. "Father Jean-Juste admitted that he signed a letter which allows five security agents to use five guns. He is not, in my knowledge, facing the charge of illegal possession of gun," Joseph told The Herald.

This week, Jean-Juste was suspended by the Roman Catholic Church here after political supporters attempted to register him in the Nov. 20 presidential race. The country's electoral council did not allow the registration. On Wednesday, the priest said he would appeal the suspension.

Paul and the former prosecutor in both cases, Jean-Pierre Audain Daniel, declined to show The Herald the evidence behind the charges but insisted the arrests were not politically motivated.

Haiti candidates may go to court

BEN FOX

Associated Press

The Monterey Herald

Sept. 26, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Disgruntled presidential hopefuls who were ruled ineligible to run in the Nov. 20 election should appeal to Haiti's Supreme Court, an election official said Monday.

Several would-be candidates visited the office of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council, demanding to know why they weren't on the list published Friday of the 32 people eligible to run.

"If the court rules in their favor, they will be back on the list," said Stephan Lacroix, a spokesman for the council. "It is possible, but it also depends on the law."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice plans to visit Haiti on Tuesday to show support for the elections. During her daylong visit, she will meet with members of the interim government and representatives of a U.N. peacekeeping force.

Her visit follows one by Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general of the Organization of American States, who noted progress with voter registration - now at nearly 3 million - and with improving security in the troubled nation, where 7,600 U.N. peacekeepers patrol the streets.

Ramdin said, however, that the legal system still needs to be reformed in Haiti, where hundreds of people, including prominent political figures, have been jailed without charges.

"Our objective is to have the best possible elections in Haiti, elections which are free, fair and at the same time credible," he said Monday as he prepared to leave the country.

The electoral council has rejected 22 candidates, including Dumarsais Simeus, a wealthy U.S. businessman who is the son of Haitian peasants and owner of one of the largest black-owned businesses in the United States.

Simeus plans to appeal within the next few days, his campaign said.

Lacroix said the candidates must get a court decision in their favor before Oct. 8, which is the official start of the race - the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted following a violent February 2004 rebellion.

Simeus was barred because his U.S. citizenship makes him ineligible under the constitution, while other candidates were rejected mostly because they submitted incomplete paperwork, officials said.

Another candidate, the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a prominent figure in Aristide's Lavalas Party, was barred because he has been jailed on suspicion of involvement in the abduction and slaying of a local journalist. Jean-Juste has denied the accusations.

Jean-Juste was suspended from his church duties for his political activities, according to a letter from the archbishop released Monday.

Another candidate, Jacques Ronald Belot of the Independent Force of Haiti said he was rejected after being told the night before the Sept. 15 registration deadline that he had to put the names of all 70,000 people who signed his candidacy petition on a computer disk.

"When I told them it's impossible, the election will be over by the time I finish putting it on the disk, they said that's my problem," Belot said. He is appealing the decision.

The 32 approved candidates include two presumed front-runners: former President Rene Preval, a one-time close ally of Aristide, and Marc Bazin, a former prime minister.

Ready or not, Haiti preps for vote
US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to visit the violence-wracked capital Tuesday.

By Danna Harman | Staff writer
The Christian Science Monitor
Sept. 27, 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI -- Less than half the students showed up on the first day of classes at the New American School. The others fled the country over the summer - their families escaping the kidnappings, violence, and uncertainty that have marked the lead-up to elections in Haiti's capital.

Up the mountain from the school, in wealthy Petionville, the upcoming Nov. 20 elections - the first since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted following a violent rebellion in February 2004 - are having a different effect.

It's getting hard to find a quiet spot at The Montana, Port-au-Prince's fanciest hotel: The tennis courts have been converted into a car park, Canadian election observers with clipboards sip sweet lemonade in the upstairs bar, and UN officials wander the lobby, mumbling into radios.

"Ready or not, something is stirring," says Patrick Brutus, a local Petionville politician. "This is no time for criticism or cold feet. We are as ready as we can be," he says. "... and there is no alternative to elections now."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is expected to touch down Tuesday for a one-day unannounced visit, to this violence-wracked capital, seeking to underline Washington's commitment to the upcoming elections and fend off criticism that the US has abandoned its poorest neighbor.

The last time a secretary of State came to town - Colin Powell in 2004 - heavy gunfire erupted outside the presidential palace while he was inside. Times have changed, but security has not improved much since then.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Close to 80 percent of the population lives on less than two dollars a day, and 42 percent of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition, according to the UN's World Food Program.

Haiti's national budget of \$300 million is less than the budgets of many large US school districts. Sewage flows freely through the streets, there is often no electricity, and only one traffic light in the whole capital is functioning.

Worse yet, there is a near absence of law enforcement here, according to Amnesty International, which reports that "politically motivated arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians, rape, death threats and intimidation are routine and are perpetrated with impunity."

Violence has claimed almost 800 lives since September 2004 and some parts of the capital remain no-go areas even for the UN troops. In May, the US embassy ordered nonemergency staff to leave Haiti along with their families.

The United Nations - which has close to 8,000 peacekeepers on the ground to stabilize the situation - hopes elections next month will produce a legitimate government.

But some observers say that Haiti is not ready - and that elections might further hurt the fragile democracy here. "In a country that is slipping every day towards permanent failed state status and whose constitution has been largely ignored for years, keeping a symbolic date [for elections] must not be the first priority," warns the International Crisis Group, a think tank with offices in Brussels and Washington.

Haiti's nine-person Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), working out of a dilapidated headquarters, with a broken generator, old computers and UN soldiers on the rooftop for protection, recognizes the technical and logistical minefield they are wading through, and has already delayed most anything that can be delayed in the election process.

Voter registration, which was to have ended on Aug. 9, was delayed until this weekend, even though only 2.3 million of the approximately 4.5 million eligible voters had registered. The list of 32 approved candidates - out of 54 who had sought to run - was only released Friday. Even election day itself has been delayed - from Nov. 6 to the 20th - but, say members of the CEP, will not be pushed back any further. According to the Haitian constitution the new president must be in office by Feb. 7, 2006.

Among the candidates approved to run are former President René Préval, a onetime close ally of Aristide; Former Prime Minister Marc Louis Bazin, who is running as a candidate of a moderate faction of the ousted leader's Lavalas Family party; and former President Leslie Manigat, who was forced from his post by the army in 1988 after five months in power.

Some of the most interesting candidates are arguably those not in the running - like Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, the former dictator who was rumored to be heading back from exile in France to register for the ballot. He never showed up, but a Gallup poll released last week showed that if he had, he might have fared surprisingly well. Many respondents rated "Baby Doc" - an extravagant playboy on whose watch the country suffered famine and disease as his coffers grew - as the best president Haiti has had in the past 20 years.

The Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste, a Catholic priest and a top candidate of Aristide's Lavalas Family party, was refused a place on the ballot, on grounds that he needed to register in person - something impossible from his jail cell, where he is being held under investigation for the murder of a journalist.

Another rejection went to Texas-based Dumarsais Simeus, one of the most successful black businessmen in the US, who had recently returned to his native Haiti declaring his intention to "turn the country around as one does a business operation." The CEP ruled his dual citizenship and long-term residency in the US disqualified him.

In any case, says human rights activist Jean-Claude Bajeux, Haiti is in no mood for a savior - whether it be Jean-Juste or Simeus or anyone else. "We are not waiting for a miracle. Our expectations are modest," he says. "If we have learned anything it's that governing Haiti can't be a one-man show."

The mood here is pessimistic, according to Bajoux, or, at very best, cautiously curious. "The best we can hope for is a peaceful election," he says. "That, here, would be enough."

Ms. Harman is Latin America bureau chief for the Monitor and USA Today.

Eastern Caribbean To Haiti's Interim Prime Minister, Come But Don't Expect CARICOM Policy Change

By Tony Best

Caribbean World Radio

Sep 29, 2005

Haiti's Interim leader, Gerard LaTortue, wants to visit CARICOM nations but the lukewarm reaction he has gotten may not suit him. Yes, he was told, you may come but don't expect any change in the region's policy towards his Government in Port au Prince.

It is understood that LaTortue raised the issue with Barbados, Antigua, St. Lucia and some of their neighbors while their Prime Ministers or Foreign Ministers were in New York for the recent United Nations global summit.

Although it wasn't clear how Owen Arthur, Barbados' Prime Minister, responded to LaTortue's overtures for an official visit, what he heard from some of the other Heads of Government and various officials might not have been pleasing to his ears, say sources.

LaTortue has described Barbados as one of his favorite Caribbean nations and he often lists the names of prominent Barbadians who were his former students when he taught at a university in Puerto Rico.

But while Barbados officials in New York declined to comment on the thorny issue, at least one Prime Minister, Baldwin Spencer of Antigua & Barbuda told the Carib News that LaTortue had canvassed several countries about visiting the region but the feedback was clear: CARICOM has staked out its position and that was unlikely to change by any trip he may wish to make.

In other words, The Haitian leader was told if he visited the region he would be welcomed but at the end of the day CARICOM would stick to its guns. They would provide certain forms of assistance to Haiti as a whole, especially in areas of preparations for elections, but he shouldn't don't look for any formal endorsement of his administration.

We spoke and basically said it was a difficult situation," said Spencer. "He told me that he was trying real hard and he doesn't want to hold onto power. It's not about power. He said he wants to create an environment in which elections would be held and the people of Haiti determine their future but in order for him to do that, he has to have the sport and more particularly of the Caribbean. He said the support of the Caribbean was critical."

But like some of the others with whom LaTortue discussed the matter, Spencer didn't promise much, if anything at all.

"My response to him was 'yes, you have our support as far as working towards free and fair elections are concerned.' We are prepared to put manpower in there (Haiti), we are prepared to be a part of the process of registration of the electorate, whatever it takes to ensure that elections are fair," the Prime Minister added. "That's where CARICOM is at."

Apparently, LaTortue told Arthur, Spencer and other senior government officials that his basic goal was to see if they would be willing to be a part of a process that would send a clear message to the international community that CARICOM was on board and willing to work alongside the Interim Government.

But Spencer's response was straightforward.

"Yes," I said to him, you are clearly welcomed, we wouldn't turn you away because you are still a member of CARICOM," the Prime Minister pointed out.

"But I did say to him that our position was clear in terms of what we feel should be happening in Haiti."

The pressure on CARICOM to establish formal contacts with Haiti or change course didn't come only from LaTortue along. The Canadian Prime Minister, Paul Martin, reportedly chided Caribbean nations at a closed-door meeting when he accused the region of abandoning Haiti at its time of greatest need.

But Martin was told that he was badly informed, meaning that his assessment of CARICOM's role was inaccurate.

Both Spencer and Grenada's Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Mitchell as well as St. Lucia's Foreign Minister Petrus Compton said after the meeting that they had to put Martin right because while the region wasn't prepared to establish formal contacts with the LaTortue Government, it had provided help to Haiti and was continuing to do.

"Let me put it this way, we had to tell the Canadian Prime Minister that he had been badly misinformed by his officials as to what our real position is," said Compton.

The Bahamas has a diplomatic mission in Haiti while the LaTortue Administration has an Ambassador in Kingston.

Compton said that any visit by Haiti's interim leader wouldn't trigger a review of the policy towards his Government.

"CARICOM's position is clear and it wouldn't change at this stage," he made it clear.

Congresswoman Waters Denounces Interim Government Of Haiti
By Carib News
Sep 29, 2005

WASHINGTON, D.C - Rep. Maxine Waters (CA-35) recently released a statement in response to reports that a Haitian judge ruled that there is enough evidence to try former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune for involvement in a massacre in the Haitian town of St. Marc in February of 2004. The statement was released at an issue forum entitled "Haiti: The Time for Action is Now," which was held at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 2005 Annual Legislative Conference. The Congresswoman's statement follows:

I denounce the decision of a Haitian judge to allow former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune to be tried for participation in a massacre. If the Interim Government of Haiti had any evidence against Prime Minister Neptune for any crime what-so-ever, he could have been tried in June of 2004 when he was first arrested.

Instead, the Interim Government chose to detain him illegally for well over a year. It is long past time for the illegitimate and unconstitutional Interim Government of Haiti to set the former Prime Minister free.

It is especially outrageous that the Interim Government is planning to charge Prime Minister Neptune with a massacre less than two months after releasing Louis-Jodel Chamblain from prison.

Louis-Jodel Chamblain was a death squad leader who was convicted of participation in the 1994 Raboteau massacre, a brutal massacre in a low-income neighborhood of Haiti. Ambassador James Foley, the former U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, said the Interim Government has tarnished Haiti's image by continuing to detain Prime Minister Neptune while setting this convicted killer free.

I also denounce the refusal of Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council to register Father Gerard Jean-Juste as a candidate for President of Haiti. Father Jean-Juste is a widely-respected Catholic Priest who was arrested by the Interim Government two months ago.

Like Prime Minister Neptune, he is well-known and popular among the Haitian people, and like Prime Minister Neptune, he is unjustly imprisoned by the Haitian Government.

Several members of the Lavalas political party tried to register Father Jean-Juste as their candidate for President, but they were told that candidates must appear in person in order to register. Obviously, persons who are unjustly imprisoned cannot register in person.

It is now clear that the Interim Government of Haiti is determined to eliminate anyone who could become a credible candidate in Haiti's upcoming elections.

Only by imprisoning popular politicians and religious leaders can the Interim Government make certain that its political opponents will not win the elections.

**Dumarsais Simeus Addresses Haiti
Haitian-Born Reformer Offers Proof of Citizenship and Haitian Nationality
Presidential Candidate Issues a 'Call to Action' to Join His Crusade for
Change**

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti, Sept. 30 /PRNewswire/ --

The following was released today by The Dumarsais Simeus Campaign for President:

At 1:00 p.m. this afternoon Dumarsais Simeus, the Haitian-born businessman who has been nominated by a broad-based reform coalition of two Haitian opposition parties, issued a nationwide radio address to the citizens of Haiti to offer proof of his citizenship and Haitian nationality and issue a call to action to join his reform movement.

Playing simultaneously on stations throughout Haiti, Simeus said, "For 65 years of my life, I've watched the same status quo run this country into the dirt. Poverty so bad that children in my village of Pont-Sonde don't have clean water, health care so bad that women lose babies and jobs so scarce that fathers have no way to put food on the table for their families.

"I am tired of the political insiders stealing from the mouths of children," he continued. "I am asking all Haitians and the entire international community to help us sweep out the failed politics and bring in strong new leadership that is not poisoned by the dirty clique of insider politics that has crippled my beautiful country ... Leadership to bring jobs from the owner of one of the largest black-owned businesses in the world. Leadership to bring health care from a charitable philanthropist who has continuously given back to my neighbors. And leadership from a native son of the Artibonite who knows what it means to grow up working the rice fields, and who can bring real reform and a new economy to Haiti," he continued.

"We knew it wouldn't be easy, that the little group of professional politicians in power would use every dirty trick in the book to stop our crusade for change. They like Haiti the way it is today -- desperate -- so they can profit from the misery of our brothers and sisters," said Simeus.

"Like so many of my fellow Haitians, my attempts to supply relief and aid have been thwarted by this inherent political corruption. Over 280 wheelchairs and thousands of kilos of food and medical supplies remained futile and useless as they sat in customs for almost a year. Their abuse of power injures all Haitians. They abuse their control of police, law enforcement and immigration to intimidate the CEP," he said, referring to the CEP's surprising action on Friday to reverse the electoral council's earlier approval of Mr. Simeus and other candidates, despite the fact that the 72-hour window for objections to be filed publicly at the CEP had passed without objection to his candidacy.

The Haitian-born reformer has since instructed his legal team to prepare a series of formal legal summons to force the government to release all previously secret records relating to the CEP's decision. The legal summons applies not only to secret government records which could show the government's collusion in a back-door effort to exclude the reform campaign of

Mr. Simeus, but also includes a summons demanding immediate release of any documents showing how the government may have intervened to selectively approve or block other presidential candidates.

"The people in power intervened with a heavy hand, outside the constitutional powers of the government and refused the appeal by Secretary Rice and the international community to open the ballot to everyone who wants to run," insisted the Artibonite-born global executive.

"These insiders went behind closed doors to get immigration documents to prove what I could have told them ... that I am a Haitian -- not just a Haitian by birth, but Haitian of origin, as required by the constitution. My parents, grandparents -- all the way back to slaves -- are Haitian," he said as he held his Haitian passport. "As required by the Constitution, I own property in Haiti and have been a continuous and visible presence there throughout my life, personally and through my foundation, which supplies clean water and health care to the people of Haiti. Do I have another passport and documents allowing me to travel and do business in the U.S.? Of course I have a secondary U.S. passport and other appropriate documents."

Interestingly, while government spokesmen have cited the nationality issue verbally, the CEP has yet to issue a formal, written document listing the nationality issue as a concern. In fact, as of Friday morning the CEP had yet to provide the Simeus campaign with the written list of specific objections required within 24 hours under the law for any CEP rejection of a ballot application.

Mr. Simeus supplied all of the legal documents, paperwork, party nominations, signatures, affidavits and candidate files required by the CEP. Attorneys for Mr. Simeus had received formal, written confirmation of provisional acceptance of his candidacy last week, including the legal guarantee that his name would be on the presidential ballot unless objections were lodged within the 72-hour window.

Last Friday, the CEP suddenly and inexplicably reversed that decision, striking Mr. Simeus from the list of candidates released by the provisional government in Port au Prince at the last minute. However, that list is provisional and subject to appeal.

"I will take this fight to the Supreme Court because this movement is committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure that every Haitian has the right to choose their next leader," said Simeus. "The country is ready to move forward from this endless debate about my nationality and start talking about how we will change the future of Haiti for the better."

SOURCE The Dumarsais Simeus Campaign for President

Haiti's endless struggle

Author: Tim Pelzer

People's Weekly World Newspaper,

09/29/05

Aristide and the Endless Revolution

Baraka Productions

Directed by Nicholas Rossier

82 minutes, English, French and Creole with English subtitles

Showings: Vancouver International Film Festival, Oct. 1 and 10; UN Film Festival at Stanford University, Oct. 19-23.

On Feb. 29, 2004, elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed a second time and forced to leave the country. In "Aristide and the Endless Revolution," veteran filmmaker Nicolas Rossier takes his camera to Haiti, the U.S., South Africa and Barbados to learn the truth about what led to Aristide's expulsion from office. The result is an engaging, informative documentary that sheds light on the U.S. role in overthrowing a democratically elected president.

Aristide, a Catholic priest, rode a wave of discontent that took him from a small parish in the Port-au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil to Haiti's presidential palace. From his parish pulpit, he spoke out against the widespread poverty and inequality that characterized Haitian society. Soon after a popular uprising that overthrew the 30-year Duvalier dictatorship, Aristide founded the Fanmi Lavalas party and contested the country's first free elections in 1990 as the party's presidential candidate. Campaigning among the country's poor whom the country's elite had long ignored, he defeated the U.S.-backed candidate.

But the Haitian president never had an easy time with its U.S. neighbor. In 1991, the CIA sponsored a coup under the elder Bush administration, which deposed Aristide for three years. In 1994, Aristide was restored to power under the Clinton administration, yet was subsequently betrayed in 2000 by the same administration.

According to John Shattuck, former U.S. assistant secretary of state under Clinton, Aristide tried to be "the voice of the voiceless, the voice of people who had no source of support, victims of a corrupt elite and military regime." This led, according to Rossier, to Aristide's ouster.

Once in power Aristide built schools, hospitals and medical clinics in impoverished areas; he raised the minimum wage from 38 cents a day to one dollar; he disbanded the country's hated military. While earning him a dedicated following among the poor, Aristide's reforms were deeply unpopular with the country's elite and Washington. Large U.S. companies such as Walt Disney, which make clothing and other products in Haitian free trade zones, resented that Aristide raised the minimum wage.

Haiti held parliamentary and presidential elections in 2000, which Lavalas won overwhelmingly. While international observers judged the elections to be largely clean, they disputed the results of eight senate seat races. The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) declared Lavalas candidates in these contests to be the winners because they received the most votes. However, according to a former Organization of American States official who observed the elections, the Haitian constitution requires

that candidates receive at least 51 percent of the vote to win, and if no one candidate receives this amount, a runoff is held. Seven of the Lavalas senators resigned and Aristide asked the CEP to set new elections.

The U.S. government and Haiti's business-backed opposition used the senate seat controversy as an excuse to declare the 2000 elections fraudulent. The U.S. then convinced the World Bank to cut off loans to Haiti, depriving the country of funds for social programs. Soon the economy began to fray.

Then, during the George W. Bush presidency, in January 2004, former Haitian soldiers armed with U.S. built M-16s invaded the country from bases in the Dominican Republic. Sweeping aside lightly armed opposition, they marched towards Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince. As Aristide prepared to defend the capital to the death, he told Rossier that U.S. soldiers seized him, placed him on a plane and flew him into exile to Africa.

Rossier's documentary is well researched and balanced. He speaks with both opponents and supporters of Aristide. From the standpoint of cinematography, Rossier artfully mixes images of interviewees, old news footage and lush scenes of Haitian landscape. "Aristide and the Endless Revolution" is an excellent documentary that should be seen by those wanting a better understanding of contemporary Haitian politics.

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Dominican leader seeks gun control

Associated Press

Billings Gazette

October 2, 2005

BANI, Dominican Republic - Tania Diaz sits on the floor of her family's one-bedroom shack, lowering her head to hide her eyes.

The tall, thin 5-year-old was struck by a stray bullet that left her blind - one in a series of random incidents of gun violence that has forced this Caribbean nation to reconsider its casual attitude toward firearms.

President Leonel Fernandez has called for a debate on the issue in a country where men walk around with pistols strapped to their belts and women regularly carry revolvers in their purses.

The obstacles are many: overcoming a cultural acceptance of gun possession, tracking down an unknown number of firearms smuggled in from neighboring Haiti and rooting out corrupt police officers who facilitate the illegal arms trade.

"Here you need to have your gun out so the criminals see it and retreat," said Jose Dia, a 33-year-old businessman who recently bought a 9 mm pistol in the capital of Santo Domingo.

Fernandez recently invited two children injured by stray bullets to appear on his weekly television spot to emphasize the need for gun control.

Dominican law has long required gun owners to conceal their weapons from public view. But the law is rarely enforced. Thousands of private security guards tote shotguns outside stores, gas stations, banks and private homes.

Revelers also fire into the air during national celebrations, shootouts at nightclubs are common and domestic disputes frequently end in gunshot deaths.

Last month, an argument during a meeting of regional politicians outside Santo Domingo ended in a shootout, leaving four dead and a dozen injured.

The statistics on guns are staggering in a country of 8.8 million.

At least 25 children have been killed or injured by stray bullets since January, say law enforcement officials and doctors at hospitals.

1,719 homicides were committed in the first eight months of the year, compared with 1,513 during the same period in 2004. Police estimate guns are used in 75 percent of homicides.

190,000 firearms are registered, including pistols, shotguns, rifles and automatic weapons used by the military, said Secretary of Interior and Police Frank Almeyda.

The country has hundreds of thousands of illegal guns, the majority smuggled in from Haiti, which shares an ill-patrolled 225-mile border with the Dominican Republic.

As a first step toward gun control, the government announced two weeks ago that people who renew or apply for new permits will not be allowed to carry their weapons unless they get special authorization.

Earlier this year, a team of 300 police officers and soldiers began searching vehicles at checkpoints and stopping people carrying guns on the streets to ask for permits.

The team confiscates about 1,000 illegally possessed guns a month, Almeyda said. But efforts are hindered by rampant police corruption, he said.

"Electoral Cleansing" in Haiti Violates Human Rights and Democracy

By Brian Concannon Jr. | September 29, 2005

Americas Program, International Relations Center (IRC) americas.irc-online.org

Haiti is in the midst of a comprehensive program of electoral cleansing.

Its ballots are being cleansed of political dissidents, its voting rolls cleansed of the urban and rural poor. The streets are being cleansed of anti-government political activity.

This cleansing violates the fundamental human rights guaranteed by the charters and other instruments of the OAS and the UN. It also violates the electoral standards that are applied in other countries, and that were applied to elections run by Haiti's constitutional governments. The persecution and disenfranchisement of political opponents is being conducted openly, notoriously, and under the eyes of the international community. The persecution is not the result of a government unable to assure adequate security, but of a deliberate and multifaceted campaign against opponents by Haiti's Interim Government. This government's primary benefactor is the American taxpayer.

Haiti's ballots have been cleansed by prohibiting or discouraging political opponents, especially supporters of the ousted constitutional government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In some cases this has been done by the application of rules that appear neutral on the surface, but have a targeted impact. For example, all presidential candidates were required to register in person by September 15, but only Lavalas candidates could not meet this requirement because they were in jail. Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, widely believed to be the most popular potential candidate, was arrested without a warrant two months ago, on July 21. He has been held since then on trumped-up charges, despite a call for his release issued by twenty-nine members of the U.S. House of Representatives led by Rep. Waters and echoed by Amnesty International, Human Rights First, and hundreds of religious, community, and human rights leaders throughout the world.

Yvon Neptune, Haiti's last constitutional Prime Minister, has been in prison since May 2004. U.S. Ambassador James Foley, in his last address before leaving Haiti in August, called Mr. Neptune's detention "a violation of human rights, an injustice, and an abuse of power." He aptly contrasted Prime Minister Neptune's treatment with the expedited release of death squad leader and convicted murderer Jodel Chamblain at the same time. Although formal charges were finally announced against Mr. Neptune on September 19, the charges resulted from a long process packed with irregularities.

Less prominent dissidents have been imprisoned explicitly for being "close to the former regime." All these arrests directly limit the arrestees' political activities, but more important, each political arrest dissuades many others from participating in politics.

While the most likely Presidential candidate has been excluded, an unlikely 54 candidates from 45 parties have filed. This is a sign not of confidence in the elections, but a widespread belief that the vote may be so undemocratic that almost anyone might win. The announced candidates include top officials of past dictatorships, a paramilitary leader identified as a drug trafficker by the United States, and an American citizen and Texas resident running despite bars in two independent clauses of the Constitution.

The Haitian government has also cleansed electoral rolls by discouraging voters through political persecution and by imposing hurdles that disproportionately affect poorer Haitians. With the end of the third prolongation of the registration period approaching, only about 2.4 million of Haiti's 4.5 million eligible voters have registered.

This low registration rate—despite non-electoral incentives including making voter registration a requirement for obtaining a national ID card, passport, or driver's license—has resulted in grand part from a lack of coverage of electoral services in the nation. Whereas Haiti's democratic governments provided over 10,000 voter registration offices and polling places for elections, the Interim Government plans to install only 424. This figure is worth comparing to Los Angeles County, which has a slightly larger population than Haiti but only 37% of the land area and infinitely better private and public transportation. L.A. County expects to have about 4,400 polling places for its November elections—over ten times what Haiti expects.

The insufficiency of polling and registration offices, like most burdens in Haiti, falls heaviest on the urban and rural poor. By mid-July, half-way through the registration period, there were three registration offices in Petionville, an upscale suburb, and three in the entire Central Plateau department, a large rural district. To this day, there is not one registration office in Cite Soleil, a poor, urban neighborhood of 300,000 inhabitants. Similarly Bel-Air, another poor neighborhood, currently has only one registration office.

Public spaces have also been cleansed of anti-government political activity through a combination of explicit government policies and brutal police attacks. On September 17, the Interim Government issued an order prohibiting all demonstrations until October 2. This order is as unconstitutional in Haiti as it would be in the United States. It is a general hindrance to organizing for the elections, but it is particularly targeted at a large demonstration previously announced by government critics for next Friday, September 30, to commemorate the anniversary of the first coup d'etat against President Aristide in 1991.

Over and over again, the Haitian police have responded to legal anti-government demonstrations with lethal force. On May 18, 2004 the police violently closed down a demonstration on the grounds that they had not been notified—pretext they were forced to retract a few days later. On February 28 of this year, police shot into a peaceful demonstration in full view of the international press and United Nations Peacekeepers.

The August 20 soccer massacre in the Grande Ravine neighborhood is illustrative of both the Haitian police's brutality and the futility of trying to reform the Haitian government by feeding it guns and money. Police accompanied by machete-wielding civilians attacked a soccer crowd of thousands, shooting or hacking to death at least six and as many as thirty spectators.

Our tax dollars were at both ends of the killing. The soccer game was sponsored by a USAID program, to promote peace in the neighborhood. The United States also sponsors the killers, the Haitian National Police, by providing guns and weapons despite a consistent history of police killings over the last eighteen months. When the House of Representatives passed Rep. Barbara Lee's resolution to block arms transfers on June 28, the State Department responded by announcing on August 9 that it would

send \$1.9 million worth of guns and other equipment to the police, before the elections and presumably before the Senate could vote on the resolution.

There has been much discussion about whether Fanmi Lavalas, Haiti's largest and most popular party, will participate in the upcoming elections. The party's official position has been that the current high level of political repression makes fair elections impossible. Because the international community appears eager to place its seal of approval on elections in November, no matter how unfair, the party is faced with a dilemma. It can either risk legitimizing a patently unfair process by participating in it, or it can refuse to participate and let electees who do not represent the Haitian people run the country for the next 2-5 years. This is truly a choice of two evils, and the fact that the party chooses one over the other does not make either less evil.

What should the United States do about this situation? Passage of Rep. Lee's ban on arms transfers to the police as long as they continue persecuting is a good start. Congress should also inform the Interim Government that it will not accept the results of any elections that are not free and fair, nor will it provide continued financial support unless the persecution stops.

Rep. Waters' proposed amendment to H.R. 2601 provides solid standards for evaluating conditions as the elections approach. It asks for, among other things, adequate security, disarmament of paramilitary groups, and trials or release for the political prisoners.

Policy Recommendations to Ensure Fair Elections in Haiti

Monitor distribution of polling places and delivery of voting cards.

Review and denounce the Interim Government's attempts to limit the constitutionally-guaranteed right to assembly.

Insist on the release of all political prisoners, and defend the right of opposition members to register and campaign for office.

Ban arms transfers to the Haitian police as long as they continue persecuting.

Demand a climate for fair elections through adequate security and disarmament of paramilitary groups.

The following issues also deserve particular attention:

1) Right to Vote: Congress should continue to look at the number of polling places, and their distribution. Monitoring is needed to assure that those who have registered actually receive their cards, especially in the poor urban and rural areas. No voting cards have been delivered yet, and when delivery begins, any problems with the delivery system may disproportionately affect the poor.

2) Right to Organize: Congress should look at both de jure and de facto attempts to limit the constitutionally-guaranteed right to assembly, starting with next Friday's demonstrations.

3) Right to Campaign: Congress should also continue to follow the cases of political prisoners, and insist that they be released from prison and allowed to register and campaign for office. Special vigilance is needed to denounce forms of intimidation of dissident politicians that fall short of actual imprisonment.

It is tempting, when confronted with the complexity of the challenges facing Haiti, to look for shortcuts—accepting expedients not recognized in the constitution or candidates who are only slightly unconstitutional, or having elections for the sake of getting them done. But Haiti’s history shows that shortcuts are not the solution to the country’s problems, but the cause. In 200 years of independence, nearly every conceivable alternative to constitutional democracy has been tried in Haiti: an empire, a kingdom, foreign occupations and foreign puppets, Presidents for Life, Interim Presidents, “governments of national unity,” military dictatorships, paramilitary dictatorships. All have brought increasing misery to Haiti’s people.

Haiti needs better things from America than guns, impatience, and double standards. We can help our oldest neighbor with its complex challenges because we have overcome similar challenges ourselves throughout our history. Our Civil War is still the standard by which all political violence in the hemisphere falls short. The struggle to extend equal voting, eating, and transportation rights to all citizens was long, polarizing, and sometimes violent. Our experience in grappling with these issues should provide valuable experience to share, but should also provide the humility to accept that Haiti’s citizens may not always vote, and their representatives not always govern, exactly as we want them to.

Brian Concannon Jr. is the Director of the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, and is an analyst for the International Relations Center’s Americas Program www.americas.irc-online.org. This text is based on his presentation before the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Legislative Forum Panel on September 22, 2005.

For More Information
Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti www.ijdh.org

From Haiti's prison: Father Gerard Jean-Juste writes about Catholic Church suspension
Haiti Action Committee
Sept. 27, 2005

Dear Friends:

Your work has been having results - keep up the pressure! The cause of justice in Haiti is moving forward. Today in Port au Prince Condoleeza Rice made a point to challenge the unjust legal system in Haiti. She held up Yvon Neptune and myself as examples of how the system continues to work injustices for the people of our country. There is no doubt that your pressure is making the US and the UN face the injustices in Haiti.

Every one of you who has demonstrated, written a letter, made a phone call, stood up for justice in Haiti - I thank you. You have uplifted my spirits and the spirits of all who struggle against the machinery of injustice.

I am holding on to the log of hope in the swirling waters of injustice. The church tried to knock my hands off the log when they suspended my priestly duties when someone tried to register me as a candidate for president. I am appealing the decision to suspend me from priestly duties. Since I am not a candidate for the election for president I should be able to continue my service as a priest. But I cannot do that until I have the canon law books to defend myself. But I will do it when I can.

Contrast how the church treated me with the recent case of two white belgian priests who were being deported by the Dominican Republic for standing with the Haitian poor in that country. I salute my brothers for taking that action. There the church stood with them and even the papal nuncio came to their defense. Why is it different when I try to stand with the poor of Haiti? I too am a friend of the poor, why is there no church support.

That is why I was so happy to see all the church leaders from many faiths sign onto a letter asking for my release - your courage helps me and will hopefully help our sisters and brothers of faith in haiti struggle for justice and peace.

I want to hold on to the log of hope and cross over the waters of injustice to freedom and to continue serving the people of Haiti. I am very sensitive about the people in the St. Claire's community. As you know, the church serves hundreds of meals to hungry children several times a week. We are only able to do this with the help of the What If Foundation and Margaret Trost and all those who join in helping the poor. Please support this work and help continue our program of feeding the poor.

Punish me but do not punish the poor people. Even though I am currently under suspension, the people could not suffer.

Thank you for uplifting my spirits and keep up the pressure for human rights and justice for all the people of Haiti!

Pere Gerard Jean-Juste Pacot Annex Haitian National Penitentiary

Dictated to Bill Quigley, September 27, 2005 in prison.

Bill Quigley is a professor of law at Loyola University New Orleans and is assisting Mario Joseph of BAI in his representation of Fr. Jean-Juste. Bill is a volunteer with the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti

Another Side Of Haiti
Godfrey Eneas
The Bahama Journal
Sept. 30, 2005

A good friend of mine recently visited Haiti as part of his missionary work for his diocese, which is located in California. He is Episcopalian and his parish has a project in the rural areas of Haiti. A U.N. Advisor supplied him with this latest account of Haiti.

I write from Hinche Haiti and am sending this by satellite. Amazing. Such high technology in the midst of such horrible poverty.

Conditions here are the worst I have experienced in terms of the suffering of the poorest. Beggars are everywhere. Many are very old people.

There is no longer municipal power, nor even water in the pipes. Our well, powered by our own diesel generator, supplies water locals who fill bottles, jugs, pots, garbage cans, and other containers. Little children carry the smaller containers, women put one-five gallon pails on their heads, and men carry the larger vessels home. Our water is available to anyone.

We distributed a bag of powdered milk this morning with many of the poorest on crutches and many older people who have no support. They would come with plastic garbage bags into which one large measuring cup would be placed.

Our school flourishes, with 617 students enrolled through 12th grade. They are taught English, French, math, and science. They also have a school band now with musical instruments donated by St. Dunstan's.

UN Advisor's assessment:

On market day in Dajabón, a bustling Dominican town on the Haitian border, you can pick up many bargains if you know where to look. You can haggle the price of a live chicken down to 40 pesos (72p); wrestle 10lb of macaroni from 60 to 50 pesos; and, with some discreet inquiries, buy a Haitian child for the equivalent of £54.22. "You just ask around town," says Hilda Pe-a, who monitors border crossings for the Jesuit Refugee Service. "People know who the scouts are. You just tell them what kind of child you are looking for and they can bring across whatever it is that you want."

There is a thriving trade in Haitian children in the Dominican Republic, where they are mostly used for domestic service, agricultural work or prostitution. Eight-year-old Jesus Josef was one of them. Numbed by a mixture of trauma and shyness, this small boy with huge eyes cannot recall how he left his three brothers and mother in Haiti and ended up doing domestic work for a Dominican family in Barahona, 120 miles from the capital, Santo Domingo.

Torture

Jesus sits quietly as Father Pedro Ruquoy, who runs a refuge near Barahona, tells how he escaped from the family and ran away to a local hospice. When he arrived his neck was twisted from carrying heavy loads on his shoulder and the marks on his slender torso suggested ill-treatment. The Dominican family found out where he was and came to the hospice demanding either his return or 10,000 pesos for the loss. "They used him as a slave," says Mr. Ruquoy. "And they tortured him."

Nobody knows quite how many Haitian children like Jesus there are in the Dominican Republic. A Unicef report in 2002 put the figure at around 2,500, although some NGOs think it might be twice that. Most boys under the age of 12 end up begging or shoe shining and giving their proceeds to gang leaders; most girls of that age are used as domestic servants. Older boys are taken to work in construction or agriculture; teenage girls often end up in prostitution.

Tensions have long existed between the two countries that share the island of Hispaniola. In May, and then again last month, the Dominican Republic summarily deported thousands of Haitians, many of whom had the right to stay. A former Haitian consul to the republic, Edwin Paraison, says the situation had not been this bad since the former Dominican military leader Rafael Trujillo massacred 20,000 Haitian sugar cane workers in 1937. "This is the first time regular people are trying to run Haitians out of the country," he says. "There is an organized campaign to reject Haitian presence."

But even as Haitians are reviled, they are also needed for their cheap labour. The manner in which the children arrive varies. Some are kidnapped but most often their parents not only know, but actually pay "busones" or scouts to ensure their safe passage in the hope that they will have a better life.

"Half of all Haitians struggle to eat even once a day," says Helen Spraos, Christian Aid's Haiti representative. "It doesn't take much to push people over the brink. If the rains fail or someone falls ill, they have to sell what little they have - perhaps a pig or a goat - to buy medicines. Eventually they have to sell their land. Once they reach rock bottom, the one way they can provide for their children is by sending them to live in the cities or in the Dominican Republic. There at least they may be fed and have some prospects for making a living."

Border

Such stories are familiar in the narrow alleyways in the barrios of Cristo Rey, an area of Santo Domingo. Nine-year-old Louseny's mother died when she was a baby and she was raised by her grandmother in central Haiti. Last month, her grandmother paid her "aunt" to bring her over the border and leave her with people Louseny did not know. Louseny says she misses her home.

Florencia Talon, who looks after 10-year-old Violetta after her mother left her, says people have approached her in the street to ask her to take in children. "In most cases the Haitian family is told that the child will go to someone who will help raise the child," says Father Jose Nu-ez, the director of the Jesuit Refugee Service in Santo Domingo. "They are told they will get an education and have a better chance. But this actually happens very, very rarely. In most cases they are verbally or physically abused and mistreated."

Getting them over the border is the easy part. According to Unicef, about a third of trafficked children come through the mountains; the rest go through official border checkpoints. On market day in

Dajabón, the only papers you need to get across the bridge that links the two countries are peso notes to bribe the border guards. Those who are turned back simply wade across the Massacre River.

"The scouts are paid around 600 pesos, half of which goes to the scout and half of which is paid to the immigration authorities as a bribe," says Angelica Lopez, the Jesuit Refugee Service director in Dajabón. "The Dominican state and the military are completely complicit in the trafficking." Once across, the child will be passed through series of more informal networks until they are placed with a family, gang or into work.

There is a law against trafficking in the Dominican Republic, but it is rarely enforced and the authorities remain in denial. "There is no trafficking," says Juan Casilla, the state prosecutor for Dajabón. "I have never had one case of trafficking lodged with my office."

Mr. Ruquoy says the sugar companies are also complicit, paying Haitian traffickers 2,000 Haitian gourdes (£26.44) for each worker.

Over at the sugar fields near Barahona, the smell of burning cane stems and the sound of slashing machetes suggest a scene from another century. Hundreds of men, their ragged clothes held together by sweat and grime, hack away beneath a high sun and above the smouldering stems, which are easier to cut when burned. From 6am until 6pm they are there, swinging, yanking, slicing and burning for about £1 a day. Ask any of them and they will tell you they are 18. Look and you will see that about one in eight could not possibly be older than 16.

Cheated

Jesus Nord, 15, used to be one of them. Two years ago he paid a Haitian scout 50 gourdes to smuggle him over the border and then went to work in the fields for a year. After being cheated of his earnings and physically abused, he left. "I was never there when they weighed the sugar so they would give me less than they owed," he says. "They also used to beat me to make me work faster."

The Barahona refinery, the Consorcio Azucarero Central, is part of a consortium, whose main shareholder in Guatemala could not be reached for comment.

The trafficking of Haitian children represents the bottom rung of a migratory ladder through the Americas that sees Dominicans striving to get to Puerto Rico, and Puerto Ricans moving to the US. "The market for cheap labour keeps people moving," says Mr. Nu-ez. "Since so many other countries have closed their doors to Haitians the only chance they have is to go to the country that is slightly less poor than Haiti and the easiest to get to. The economy could not function without them. But it takes a terrible toll on the individuals."

OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL VISITS HAITI

Sept. 27 2005

Press Release - Organization of American States

Harold Doan and Associates

OAS Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, completed today a one-day visit to Haiti to evaluate and encourage progress in the elections, and to discuss some other issues of the work of the "OAS Special Mission to Strengthen Democracy in Haiti". During his visit, the Ambassador met with the Conseil Electoral Provisoire, the Head of the MINUSTAH, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdes, a number of ambassadors representing states supporting the transitional process, the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the OAS Special Mission to Haiti led by Ambassador Denneth Modeste, including the Electoral Technical Assistance Programme.

The OAS is engaged in supporting the electoral authorities in order to promote the best possible elections in Haiti's particular circumstances, which will be considered credible, free and fair. OAS engagement focuses on voter registration and the production of national identity cards. Ambassador Ramdin said the OAS was "cautiously optimistic" about progress already made in the electoral process. Improvements noted recently in the domain of security were encouraging, he said, and he expressed a hope that such improvements would continue.

The OAS Assistant Secretary General also expressed his overall satisfaction with the voter registration process so far, and underlined the organization's commitment to support CEP efforts to ensure registration of those in more remote rural areas or in sensitive security zones before the close of registration.

"It is critical that everyone should have the opportunity to register, and we will aim to support the registration of as many people as possible," Ambassador Ramdin said.

He also applauded the CEP's achievement of conducting party, presidential and parliamentary candidate registration in an inclusive manner.

The Assistant Secretary General also raised with the CEP some of his concerns about the electoral process. These included the need for the CEP to be strengthened institutionally, as some critical decisions remain to be taken, including the finalization of the electoral calendar. Ambassador Ramdin stressed his confidence that the authorities recognize the need for a realistic timetable for elections, and reiterated the OAS's support in finalizing this.

Ambassador Ramdin also gathered information on the situation of detainees in prolonged pre-trial detention, which has been identified as a serious threat to human rights in Haiti. He urged the authorities to continue their work to find a solution to this problem, and to put special emphasis on the cases of those accused of politically motivated crimes.

"I encourage the government to ensure due process is provided to all detainees, and to apply in these cases Haitian law and international treaties on human rights ratified by Haiti."

Such human rights guarantees, as well as a clear and demonstrated commitment to credible elections demonstrated by the government will contribute to the transition by strengthening democratic governability, Ambassador Ramdin said. The real challenge will be to provide the newly elected President and his cabinet with a political and legislative environment to tackle the social and economic problems of Haiti. He called on political actors to support the transition by working towards national consensus and dialogue and agreeing to ensure post electoral governance, independent of the outcome of the elections.

Ambassador Ramdin reaffirmed the support of the OAS to the transitional process in Haiti, and reiterated to the authorities the hemispheric organization's continued and long term commitment to reconstruction and promotion of democracy.

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State Secretary Helgesen applauds launching of governability pact in Haiti

- I hope that the governability pact that has now been concluded between the political parties in Haiti will ensure a successful transition to democracy in the country, said State Secretary Vidar Helgesen when the Haitian governability pact was launched in Port-au-Prince on 27 September.

Under the pact, the parties undertake to carry out democratic elections and political dialogue, and to establish a state governed by the rule of law. At the same time they renounce the use of violence. The governability pact marks the last stage in a process in which the parties have agreed among themselves on the rules of the game: first an electoral pact, then an all-party platform, and now a governability pact.

- The challenge now is to put these democratic rules into effect. Norway will continue its engagement in close dialogue with the parties. At the same time it is important for the international community to follow up the various actors and encourage them to abide by their commitments, said Mr Helgesen.

The situation in Haiti is still extremely tense. A total of four million Haitians will go to the polls this autumn. The first round of the elections for a president and a national assembly is scheduled for the end of November, and the second round for January. The local elections will probably be held in January. Since President Aristide was relieved of his presidential duties and sent into exile in February 2004, the country has been governed by an interim government supported by the multinational UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Norway has been a driving force in the efforts to establish a political dialogue and a code of conduct agreed on by the parties taking part in the elections. The Norwegian Government co-operates closely with Norwegian Church Aid in its engagement in Haiti.

The pact is the result of close consultations between the political groups in Haiti, which have been carried out by the Norwegian-financed Haitian Institute for Advanced Social and Political Studies (IPOS) in co-operation with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Haiti: A home for a child orphaned by Hurricane JeanneBy Sylvana Nzirorera and Kun Li

Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Date: 26 Sep 2005

PORT-AU-PRINCE, 26 September 2005 -- "When Hurricane Jeanne hit Gonaives [one year ago], my home was destroyed and both my parents died," said Daniel Joseph, 11. With no one to turn to for help, Daniel went to Port-au-Prince, the capital.

"I came to Port-au-Prince by climbing onto the back of a bus. One day, a lady saw me crying on the street. She brought me to the police station, and after two days they brought me to this centre," said Daniel.

The centre is called 'Le Centre d'Aide au Développement' (CAD), a Haitian non-governmental organization that provides a home for otherwise homeless children like Daniel. Supported by UNICEF, CAD hosts roughly 280 girls and boys aged 6-19, providing them with shelter, food, health care, education, and life skills training.

"The first time I saw Daniel, he had no shoes on and had a cut on his right finger. He was crying and traumatized," recalled Marline Mondésir, Director of CAD. "We treated his injury, and asked a psychologist to help him with his emotional wounds. Since he came here, he has gained weight, and is doing much better."

A home and an education

"In this centre, they teach us writing and reading, as well as math and French," said Daniel. "I like math a lot. I have made many friends here. After classes, we like to play cards and listen to music together.

"At the centre, every boy and girl washes his or her own clothes. Some of the older children are also learning mechanics, and how to sew."

Besides providing a place for the children to live and continue their education, CAD also assists in reuniting them with their families. For Daniel, the sole member of his family to survive last year's hurricane, CAD is now his only home.

Haiti has been hit hard by poverty, political instability and natural disasters; the hurricane killed over 2,500 people in Gonaives, among them Daniel's parents. An increasing number of children are being left without family and forced to live on the streets. It is estimated that there are more than 2,000 street children in Port-au-Prince alone, and the figure is on the rise.

Caring for the vulnerable

Children who live on the street are often forced to survive by washing cars, loading buses and begging. Some also become involved with prostitution. Their health and hygiene conditions are very precarious, and they are constantly at risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS.

Foster care centres like CAD have played a major role in protecting these vulnerable children, and doing what's possible to give them a normal childhood.

Protecting vulnerable children like Daniel from exploitation and abuse is a priority for UNICEF Haiti. "With help from UNICEF, we try and give these children as much as we can, so they won't go back and live on the streets any more," said Ms. Mondésir.

Daniel is now living happily and healthily at CAD. "I want to continue studying and become a mechanic when I grow up. I wish that all children who don't have a home could find a home, and learn to read and write like me."

Stan Drifts West of Haiti
September 28, 2005
Haiti Action Committee

September 28, 2005 - Yes. It's as bad as it looks. This Composite Sea Surface Temperature map shows that the projected path of this system will be slowly moving through the hottest region in the ocean for the next week. Unless the upper level shear can break apart this formation it's likely that 99L Invest will become Tropical Storm Stan within three days. The system's progress didn't increase overnight — as expected — but conditions are still favorable for a Hurricane to reach the Gulf of Mexico soon. In short, the longer Stan sits over the red, the stronger it gets. [HaitiAction.net Links Latest Info on Tropical Cyclones for Caribbean](#)

1 knots = 1.15077945 mph
The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale
What "Category 1-2-3-4-5" means

TCFA - Tropical Cyclone Formation Alert checklist

Stan drifts west of Haiti: the tropical wave moves through rising heat
Officially known as "99L Invest" the weather system that will likely become the eighteenth named storm of the record 2005 hurricane season in the next couple of days as it ominously moves toward the battered Gulf States of the USA. As can be seen by the Composite Sea Surface Temperature — satellite image map above — the conditions are favorable for this system to gain strength as it moves through the Yucatan Channel into the Gulf of Mexico.

The tropical wave could gain strength and become "Tropical Storm Stan" before moving into the Gulf. In the last couple of years extremely dangerous hurricanes - Hurricane Ivan and Hurricane Emily - have taken that similar route near the Yucatan Channel. After moving into The Gulf this system could find the warmest currents to become a hurricane which would threaten New Orleans with a storm surge for the third time this year. The National Hurricane Center of Miami Florida is warning interests in Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Cuba and the rest of the northwest Caribbean to closely monitor the progress of this system over the next few days

HaitiAction.net will have updates to this system as they affect this region. For the latest bulletins go to <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/> first.

