

Dear colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for April 6 - 26, 2007.

Canada's ambassador to the UN, John McNee, credited the UN and MINUSTAH for achieving a "measure of political stability and a considerable increase in security" during his four day trip to Haiti leading an advisory group from the UN Economic and Social Council. This CBC story is yet another glowing report of the UN's impact in Haiti thus justifying their continued presence. Although crediting the UN with 'political stability' and arresting 400 gang leaders in 2007 (more likely 400 gang *members*, although there is little evidence presented all those arrested were in fact gang members). Furthering the exaggeration of the UN's recent impact, McNee reported on his visit to Cite Soleil saying that "a visit to the slum by foreign observers would have been unthinkable even four months ago." This is untrue as many foreigners and journalists safely visit and file reports from Cite Soleil. It is only the UN soldiers themselves, perpetrators of excessive use of force, who for obvious reasons have been unwelcome.

An AP/Boston Globe article "UN patrol welcome in slum streets of Haiti" draws a simplistic view that the UN's February offensive and arrest of 400 suspected gang members has in fact improved security for the UN, whether or not the troops are actually more 'welcome' in Cite Soleil is doubtful. "The peacekeepers' problem is to distinguish gang members from unemployed youths hanging out on street corners" said one UN Lieutenant. The article's thrust is further justification of the UN's presence in Haiti, with UN envoy Mulet confident the UN will renew MINUSTAH's mandate in October. The Reuters story, of the same theme, at least quotes slum residents saying that peace is not enough and admitted that the gang leaders left a vacuum, whereby they had been local conduits for distributing needed food or services to poor residents.

Reuters AlertNet contributed an April 23rd report based on a BBC series about peacekeeping and the lucrative and attractive benefits accrued to those policemen or soldiers who serve from such South Asian countries as Bangladesh, Nepal or Pakistan exclaiming it's a "dream to serve with a U.N. peacekeeping mission." One Nepalese soldier currently serving in the Haiti mission (described as one of the least desirable missions, along with the Congo) saved enough money from his \$85/day salary to build a house back in Nepal, coupled with enjoying the relative comforts of Haitian swimming pools and beaches on his days off in Haiti. The story details the bureaucratic process by which peacekeeping missions are formed while omitting mention of the unique exception taken in the case of Haiti in 2004 where rather than enforcing a peace agreement the UN intervened to enforce a coup d'etat.

The AP/IHT article about a "handful of loyalists [who] are campaigning to bring Duvalier home from exile in France" contrasts with the majority of Haitians who do not favor his return and would certainly never elect him President. While the article presents both sides of the story, the fact the story spotlights a 'handful of Duvalier loyalists' who were obviously benefactors under decades of repressive regimes versus the violence and insecurity brought on apparently by democracy would have been more fairly presented if

there had been mention of the disparity in foreign government and international financial institution's uncritical support and financing of the Duvaliers versus the global scrutiny, undermining and ousting of Haiti's democratic leaders as overwhelming contributors to that very disparity in levels of security, well-being and prosperity in Haiti.

The AP story on Haiti's high cost of burying their dead is another grim reality for Haiti's poor majority. The prohibitive cost of Haitian funerals coupled with a deep social regard for properly burying one's dead leaves Haitians with few options other than to deny their relatives dignity in death, the same dignity denied in life.

The AP and Newsday reported on the killing of journalist and former Aristide spokesman, Johnson Edouard in Gonaives. Edouard had also been a correspondent for Haiti Progres newspaper, based in New York.

The South Florida Sun Sentinel covered the emotional funeral for Lifaite Lully, the Haitian man who drowned when he and his fellow 101 Haitians came ashore on March 28 near Hollywood beach, Florida. The story offered a uniquely personal glimpse into the life, family and responsibilities Lully left behind for the remote chance of reaching the U.S., finding work and ultimately sending money back to those who pinned their hopes on him. The funeral galvanized South Florida Haitian and immigration activists advocating greater justice and equal treatment for Haitian migrants.

CONTENTS:

- 1. Haiti in better shape because of UN: Canadian diplomat, CBC News**
- 2. UN patrol welcome in slum streets of Haiti, AP and Boston Globe**
- 3. Haiti slum residents enjoy new peace, want more, Reuters**
- 4. U.N. peacekeeping: Every soldier's dream?, Reuters AlertNet**
- 5. In Haiti, loyalists long for dictator's return, AP and International Herald Tribune**
- 6. In Haiti, burying the dead is a luxury, The Associated Press**
- 7. Report: Gunmen kill Haiti journalist with NYC paper, AP and NY Newsday**
- 8. Crowds mourn drowned Haitian man, South Florida Sun-Sentinel**
- 9. Migrants from Haiti going against tide, Miami Herald**

1. Haiti in better shape because of UN: Canadian diplomat Wednesday, April 25, 2007

CBC News

<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/04/25/mission-haiti.html>

The UN has helped to increase political stability and personal security in Haiti but the country continues to be in a fragile state, with daunting economic challenges, Canada's ambassador to the UN said Wednesday.

John McNee, who led an advisory group from the UN Economic and Social Council on a four-day trip to Haiti last week, told reporters at UN headquarters in New York that the situation in the country is more hopeful than even a few months ago.

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, along with the help of international aid, has been able to achieve a "measure of political stability" and a "considerable increase in security" in Haiti, McNee said.

But McNee said Haiti needs to find long-term answers to its deep economic problems.

"We were all struck by the developmental challenges in Haiti," he said. "The situation remains fragile. In fairness, we should stress the fragility of it."

The real challenge, he said, is increasing employment in Haiti, and if the economic situation could be improved, then people could be persuaded not to get involved in criminal activity.

McNee said tourism and agriculture are two sectors that, if developed, could help to pull Haiti out of poverty.

There are already signs that tourism may be making a small comeback and the country once produced a high grade of coffee and could do so again, he said.

A crackdown by UN forces and Haitian police on armed criminal gangs has helped to improve security, particularly in the capital, Port-au-Prince, McNee said.

400 gang leaders arrested

Since the start of this year, more than 400 gang leaders have been arrested.

This week, UN peacekeepers and Haitian national police arrested a reputed gang leader, Belony Pierre, who had been on the run since February. He faces charges of murder and kidnapping.

The advisory group went to Haiti to assess economic and social development strategies for the country as well as the work of the UN mission and international assistance. It met the president, prime minister and many members of the Haitian cabinet.

McNee said it was able to visit Cité Soleil, a notorious slum area in the capital recently made safer by the arrests of gang leaders. A visit to the slum by foreign observers would have been unthinkable even four months ago, he said.

McNee said there is no question that the UN mission is making a difference in Haiti.

"It's clear that MINUSTAH is playing an essential role at the present time. It would be premature to start thinking of winding it up," he said.

The UN mission in Haiti was established in October 2004 after an insurgency forced then president Jean-Bertrand Aristide to go into exile. The advisory group, which also visited Haiti in 2005, was tracking progress since its last visit.

According to the Foreign Affairs department, Canada is contributing up to 100 civilian police officers to the stabilization mission in Haiti.

"Haiti is now Canada's most important long-term development assistance beneficiary in the Americas, and the second largest in the world [after Afghanistan]," according to the department's website.

2. UN patrol welcome in slum streets of Haiti

By Stevenson Jacobs

Associated Press

Boston Globe

April 13, 2007

http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2007/04/13/un_patrol_welcome_in_slum_streets_of_haiti/

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- As their two white armored cars push deep inside Haiti's largest slum, the Brazilian UN peacekeepers peer over their rifles for enemy gunmen amid spray-painted slogans saying "Down with the U.N."

But the graffiti seems to be contradicted by the smiles and waves from gaunt women and children fetching water with plastic buckets.

Two months ago, UN peacekeepers couldn't set foot in Cité Soleil without waging gunbattles with armed gangs who controlled the seaside slum by Haiti's capital.

"We used to take fire all the time," Lieutenant Jose Serrano told a reporter accompanying the patrol he was leading.

Now his unit has gone more than 60 days without taking fire, and Cité Soleil is enjoying its most tranquil period since a 2004 revolt ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and led to the deployment of 9,000 UN peacekeepers.

The reason for the quiet, says the United Nations, is its February offensive and the arrest of 400 suspected gang members, including several leaders wanted for a string of killings and kidnappings in Port-au-Prince.

The gangs, at least for now, are out of commission in Cité Soleil. A blue UN flag flies from a bullet-scarred school-turned-military base. A few days after Serrano's patrol passed through, UN special envoy Edmond Mulet made his second visit to the slum and painted over a gang mural of a Kalashnikov rifle as onlookers cheered.

When Serrano was first deployed to Haiti in December, gunmen would fire at the tires of his armored car. No resident dared speak to the soldiers for fear of being labeled an informer.

"Now they actually look forward to seeing us. It's better for them, better for us," he said.

Alfred Jean-Daniel, an unemployed 24-year-old who lives in a shack made of scrap metal, said, "If the gangs come back, that will only bring problems, and we don't need any more problems."

But the peacekeepers aren't letting their guard down. A radio crackles and the armored cars stop. The soldiers spill out onto a dusty, sunbaked alley and creep block by block in search of gunmen. All they get is grins and quizzical stares from onlookers.

The peacekeepers' problem is to distinguish gang members from unemployed youths hanging out on street corners. "The bandits are still here," Serrano said. "They didn't all leave. It makes our job hard because we don't know who is a bandit and who isn't."

It's the same difficulty US forces face in Iraq. Another Iraq parallel lies in the likelihood that if the peacekeepers leave too soon, the enemy will regain control.

"Previous experience has shown that if we leave too early, we have to come back again," Mulet said during his visit. "We'll stay here some time until everything is in place."

The UN mandate in Haiti expires in October, but the Security Council is expected to renew it. About 9,000 troops and civilian police officers from more than a dozen nations - mostly Jordan, Brazil, Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Guatemala and Chile -- serve in the mission.

3. Haiti slum residents enjoy new peace, want more

Friday, April 20, 2007

By Joseph Guyler Delva

Reuters

Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters): Residents of Haiti's largest slums are enjoying more undisturbed nights since UN peacekeepers cleared out armed gangs, but they still want to see food, jobs and other hoped-for benefits of the new peace.

UN troops have dismantled a number of street gangs in the capital's sprawling slums since the beginning of the year and forced dozens of feared gang leaders to flee.

But residents say a dearth of social and economic programs may yet hamper efforts to achieve durable stability in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas.

"It's true the security situation has considerably improved, but you can't eat security. You need food and jobs and schools," said Mackenzy Pierre-Paul, a 32-year-old resident of Cite Soleil, Haiti's largest slum.

"The government and the international community need to rapidly invest in social programs to keep this peace," Pierre-Paul said.

The slums of Port-au-Prince have been gripped by gang violence periodically since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was pushed from power by an armed rebellion in 2004.

Under increasing international pressure to control the slums, UN troops sent to Haiti after Aristide was ousted launched an offensive more than two months ago that wrested control of Cite Soleil, Martissant and other shantytowns from the gangs.

Some of the most powerful gang leaders, among them Evens Jeune and William "Ti Blan" Baptiste, were arrested.

When the gangs ruled, gunfire often rang out at night and residents cowered in their flimsy shacks, afraid to sleep or move.

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Now schools that had been closed for years have opened their doors. Residents who fled the area are returning, shops have reopened and the street markets are bustling again.

UN troops and Haitian police play with children in the streets in areas where they would not have dared set foot three months ago.

Marijo St-Fort, 37, said she organized a small birthday party for her 10-year-old son Michael this month, for the first time in five years.

"We did not have enough food and drinks to distribute to our guests, but we played music all night and had fun until 1 o'clock," she said. "It would have been unthinkable when the population was living under gang rule. Now we feel free, even though we still go hungry and penniless."

Some residents believe their situation has a better chance to improve because peacekeepers and Haitian police control the streets.

"It was a very good thing to chase away the armed gangs ... because you can't have development, job creation and social progress in places controlled by heavily armed bandits," said Bazil Banatte, who lives in the Bwa Nef area of Cite Soleil.

SHARING LOOT

But some Cite Soleil residents express nostalgia for the rule of the gang leaders, who sometimes shared out kidnapping ransoms and other loot.

"The international community and the government have failed so far to fill the vacuum left by the gangs who used to help the population," said Mirlande Augustin, 27, a mother of four.

There are efforts being made to address the deep social needs, but progress is slow.

President Rene Preval has complained about delays in the disbursement of international funds pledged for Haiti, a nation of 8 million people where most live on less than \$2 a day.

"If the donor community and the government do not provide an alternative to the youngsters in the forgotten slums, violence and criminality will always be an option," said Renan Hedouville, head of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said this month the Bush administration would provide \$20 million to fund social and economic programs in Cite Soleil.

Yele Haiti, a foundation created by Haitian hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean, is distributing food, cleaning streets and paying scholarships for several thousand poor children.

"But only a massive investment program can bring about a structural change in the slums," said Max Henry Dieufene, a Cite Soleil carpenter.

4. U.N. peacekeeping: Every soldier's dream?

23 Apr 2007

Reuters AlertNet

<http://www.alertnet.org/db/blogs/1265/2007/03/23-151110-1.htm>

"It's every Nepalese policeman or soldier's dream to serve with a U.N. peacekeeping mission. There's so much competition but also rampant favouritism and nepotism," says Nepalese policeman Sushil Kumar Khanal. His country is one of the top five contributors of personnel to U.N. peacekeeping missions, according to the BBC's five-part series on peacekeeping.

It's not the only South Asian country to be at the top of the list when it comes to serving under the U.N. flag. Together, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal make up 40 per cent of police, troops and staff on the ground.

One of the attractions is the pay and, in some cases, relatively good living conditions.

"(Without serving in a peacekeeping mission in Haiti), I don't think my savings from my service at home would have helped that much - whatever we make (in Nepal) is hardly enough to survive," Khanal is quoted as saying.

In Haiti, he and his colleagues could relax in swimming pools or nearby beaches after their eight-hour shift or on their days off. And back home, Khanal built a house and sent his children to good schools with the help of the \$85-a-day salary he earned in Haiti.

The U.N. pays governments \$1,028 (£513) a month for each peacekeeper - more for specialists - plus extras for equipment and personal weaponry. This amount is unlikely to be an attractive salary for policemen and soldiers from richer countries.

But it's not just about the money. Peacekeeping is certainly a "much-desired assignment" in Bangladesh just like in Nepal, but it's also important for the country's image abroad, according to Fazle Elahi Akbar, a former general in the Bangladeshi army, cited by the BBC.

Some missions are known as an easy option, such as the so-called "Five-Star Mission" in Cyprus. The operation is considered relatively safe and carried out on an island full of tourists.

It's a different story in places such as Haiti and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where U.N. troops went as far as engaging in battles in order to enforce peace - a significant departure from the 1990s passive style of peacekeeping.

A battle between the U.N. and armed gangs in Haiti's Port-au-Prince slum of Cite Soleil earlier this year, resulted in some civilian casualties. In DRC, Maj Gen Patrick Cammaert took over the mission in early 2005 and set about enforcing the principle that "U.N. forces are impartial and not neutral". U.N. forces ended up fighting militias in the eastern part of the country.

But how are peacekeeping missions formed in the first place?

A request for a mission is put before the U.N. Security Council, which votes on whether it agrees in principle to the mission. This is the first resolution. If the vote goes through - and isn't vetoed by one of the five permanent Council members - then the U.N. secretary-general dispatches an assessment mission. The resulting detailed plan and rough budget is put before the Council for a second vote. A 'yes' vote to this second resolution (called a mandate) formally authorises the mission. The BBC's Patrick Jackson explains the lengthy process.

Only after the mandate has been approved can the U.N. Secretariat contact countries who may be contributing troops and equipment to the mission, according to Jean-Marie Guehenno, head of UN peacekeeping operations, in a debate with John Bolton, former U.S. envoy to the United Nations.

But even once this lengthy process is over, there's a lot more to do. Housing needs to be found or built, finances sorted out, people recruited and so on. Which is why it may take six months to deploy the 3,000 peacekeepers that Sudan has agreed to accept for Darfur.

5. In Haiti, loyalists long for dictator's return

The Associated Press

International Herald Tribune

April 21, 2007

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/04/21/news/CB-GEN-Haiti-Baby-Doc.php>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haitians danced in the streets to celebrate the overthrow of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, heckling the tubby, boyish tyrant as he was driven to the airport in a black limousine and flown into exile in 1986.

Most Haitians hoped the rapacious strongman known as "Baby Doc" had left for good, closing a dark chapter of terror and repression that began under his late father, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

But now, a handful of loyalists are campaigning to bring Duvalier home from exile in France, launching a foundation to improve the dictatorship's image and reviving Duvalier's political party in the hopes that one day he can return to power democratically.

His backers concede life in Haiti could be brutal for Duvalier's opponents but are nostalgic for the relatively stable period the country experienced, compared to the upheavals of recent years.

"Since Jean-Claude left, there's no work, no food, no nothing. Only burning tires, people getting killed and kidnappings," Jesus Duvernois, 71, said at a gathering last week to mark Papa Doc's 100th birthday. "Without Duvalier, there is no country."

Dozens attended the gathering in a house in a leafy suburb of the Haitian capital, including ex-military officers, a leader of the Duvalier regime's ruthless militia and Baby's Doc's French fiancée, Veronique Roy. They sipped fruit punch, tapped their canes to old Haitian compa tunes and pined for the past while looking at black and white photos from the Duvalier era.

"I'm going to die a Duvalierist, but I hope Jean-Claude comes back before that happens," said Yvette Jean Phillipe, 63, who prays for Baby Doc's return.

But hatred for the former regime runs so deep in Haiti that it is highly unlikely the 55-year-old would ever be voted into power. Victims of the Duvalier regime are offended even by the suggestion.

"The only reason he should come back is to go to jail for all the money he stole and the people he killed," said Bobby Duval, a former soccer star who was starved and tortured while locked up for 17 months under the Duvalier regime for speaking out against human rights abuses.

The younger Duvalier was named "president for life" at age 19 following his father's death in 1971. An estimated 60,000 people were killed during the 29-year father-and-son dictatorship, while many others were maimed by the dictatorship or forced into exile. If Duvalier returns, many Haitians believe he would be arrested and charged with murder and misappropriation of US\$120 million in public funds — allegations he has denied.

His supporters founded the Francois Duvalier Foundation late last year to promote positive aspects of the dictatorship, including the creation of most of Haiti's state institutions and increased access to education for the country's black majority. Loyalists also offer pro-Duvalier lectures for youths and want to start a Duvalier-themed library and Web site.

Duvalier's National Unity Party was recently reconstituted and plans to enter candidates in December's Senate race. That would mark the party's first participation in a national election since Duvalier was toppled 21 years ago.

The party hopes he can one day democratically reclaim power. But while Duvalier, who is living in Paris, announced in 2004 his intention to return to Haiti, he has denied plans to run for president.

Haiti has embraced democracy since the Duvalier regime, but the transition has been rough. The country has suffered through repeated coups, a brutal right-wing military regime and a bloody 2004 uprising that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Today, U.N. peacekeepers provide the only real security. Haiti has only a few thousand police for a country of 8 million. Unemployment and despair are rife, leading thousands of Haitians to flee to the United States in rickety boats each year.

The democratically elected government of President Rene Preval, a one-time anti-Duvalier crusader who was elected last year, has struggled to stamp out street violence.

Duval, the ex-soccer star who now runs the L'Atletique d'Haiti sports academy for poor youths, said Duvalier's return — however improbable — would only deepen Haiti's turmoil.

"If you really want to polarize this society, bringing back Baby Doc would do it," he said.

6. In Haiti, burying the dead is a luxury

Funerals cost more than most earn; some bodies abandoned

By Stevenson Jacobs

The Associated Press

April 19 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti · Life has always been a struggle for Haiti's poor. These days, death isn't much easier.

The city morgue is under-refrigerated, jammed to capacity with unclaimed corpses and so short of funds that workers don't have paper masks to ward off the stench.

Deforestation has inflated the price of coffin wood, and hundreds -- possibly thousands -- of deaths in street violence are pushing up the price of funerals. Robbers plunder graves for coffins to resell, and families try to thwart them by smashing the coffin before it is covered with earth.

Some bereaved families are taking out high-interest "funeral loans," falling deep into debt to send off relatives with the dignity many were deprived of in life. Others have to abandon their dead on a dusty field known as Titanyen, a Creole word meaning "less than nothing," on the edge of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

A funeral now costs around \$540, more than most Haitians earn in a year. Cremation is only for the wealthy.

Haiti's largest public morgue, built to hold 390 cadavers, often has nearly 500, many strewn on the cement floor for lack of space. The dead include shooting victims, AIDS victims and babies who never saw their first birthday.

It costs a relative \$27 to pick up a body if it was dropped off at the morgue, and \$47 if the morgue had to collect it off the street. As a result, few bodies are ever claimed by relatives. They end up in a common grave outside the capital, along with those dumped at the Titanyen field.

"If the families don't have money to claim the bodies, they simply never show up," said morgue director Sergo Castor.

Marie Nicola's son was found dead in the street, his skull bashed in by unknown assailants in the taxi he was driving. The 62-year-old unemployed mother said she does not know whether she will be able to afford a decent burial.

"After you pay the morgue, you have to buy clothes for the body, a coffin and pay the church and the cemetery. We don't have anything, so it's very hard," Nicola said outside the morgue as relatives consoled her.

Outside the morgue, freelance undertakers with battered old hearses stand ready to haggle over a funeral price. It's an uncontrolled market.

"Sometimes you can see the economic situation of the person and you can negotiate a lower price. I'm human, too, so it affects me when people want to bury a relative but can't pay," said Carl Fanfan, an undertaker.

The Rev. Rick Frechette is a Catholic priest with the Illinois-based charity Friends of the Orphans, which runs an orphanage and a children's hospital in Haiti.

Trying "to do something a little more human for those that have died," the group makes coffins from papier-maché instead of wood and provides free burials for about 40 people a month, Frechette said.

Nicola said she'll ask relatives to chip in for her son's burial.

"If it's not enough then we will sell what we can," she said softly. "I will give him a good funeral if I'm able to."

7. Report: Gunmen kill Haiti journalist with NYC paper

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press

Newsday, NY

April 14, 2007

<http://www.newsday.com/news/local/wire/newyork/ny-bc-ny--haiti-journalistk0414apr14,0,6249095.story?coll=ny-region-apnewyork>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A journalist with ties to ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's political party was shot to death in his bed in northern Haiti, local radio reported Saturday.

Johnson Edouard, a correspondent for the pro-Aristide weekly newspaper Haiti Progres, which is based in Brooklyn, was killed before dawn Friday in the port city of Gonaives, 170 kilometers (105 miles) north of Port-au-Prince, reported Radio Kiskeya, citing relatives of the journalist.

Edouard, who also served as a spokesman for Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party, was reportedly sleeping when gunmen broke into his home and shot him several times in the head and throat. The killers escaped through a window.

Police have yet to establish a motive or identify suspects. However, David Francois, a Fanmi Lavalas leader in Gonaives, called Edouard's killing "a political execution" in an interview with Radio Kiskeya. He gave no further details.

Aristide was forced to flee the country in 2004 amid a three-week rebel uprising that began in Gonaives, Haiti's third-largest city.

Many former rebels who helped overthrow Aristide live in Gonaives, which is also a base for armed gangs blamed for a string of recent killings.

Haiti Progres is distributed in Haiti and the United States. Its publisher was an ambassador-at-large under Aristide. Calls to the newspaper's office went unanswered Saturday.

Attacks on journalists are common in Haiti but have dropped since the 2006 election of President Rene Preval, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists.

In January, freelance photographer Jean-Remy Badio was shot to death in a Port-au-Prince slum after receiving threats from gang members. Badio had photographed gang members days before his killing, which remains unsolved.

8. Crowds mourn drowned Haitian man

Survivors should be allowed to stay in U.S., they say

By Macollvie Jean-François

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

April 22 2007

Miami · Back in Haiti, Lifaite Lully often took his blind father's hand at bath time, to lead the 72-year-old to a pail of water warming in the tropical sun. It was one of many chores the last-born child took on as his parents' health began to fail.

When talk of a boat sailing to the Bahamas began circulating, relatives encouraged Lully, 24, to take the journey that ended with his drowning off Hollywood beach March 28.

"He was not a stingy person," his mom Isemaelite Vassor, 51, said. "Everyone knew that if he made it, he would send a little something to those back home."

The hope Lully represented for his family was not lost on the 700 mourners who packed Little Haiti's Notre Dame d'Haiti Catholic Church on Saturday for his three-hour funeral. His death less than a mile from U.S. shores renewed calls for changes in immigration policy to prevent more migrant deaths.

Speakers at the funeral invoked Lully's fate to demand that the 101 other Haitians who took the risky sea voyage with him - and survived - be released from detention.

"They are human beings like everyone else," the Rev. Reginald Jean-Mary, Notre Dame's pastor, said in a funeral homily given in Creole and English. "The death of Lifaite is not an accident in history. It is a grain of wheat that fell to the ground so that we can sow the seeds of love, of eternal harvest, of unity and peace."

Jean-Mary brought attendees to their feet with a passionate call for the U.S. government to grant Haitians temporary protected status, which allows people from some nations in the Americas, but not Haiti, to remain in the United States legally because of adverse conditions at home.

The survivors from the March landing are being held at a detention facility in Pompano Beach. Most have passed interviews that may entitle them to asylum hearings, community activists say.

Lully's mother, who came to Florida to attend her son's wake and funeral, said the boy spoiled her and his father, Cadeau Lully.

When his parents' health flagged, he took over the household chores and gave them money he earned from the few construction jobs available from time to time in their region. His father gave up farming when glaucoma led to blindness. His mother, a vegetable and meat vendor, suffered from hypertension and swollen joints.

Isemaelite said she would most likely have to go back to her vending in GrosÖ Sable, their hometown in northwestern Haiti. As she sat in church, the mother of six swayed back and forth. The mother of six also said she hoped the people who made the perilous trip with her son would have better luck in America.

"It would've been better if he hadn't left," she said. "Give them a chance, even though mine is dead," she said. "If he had made it, I would've hoped he'd get to stay."

Macollvie Jean-François may be reached at mjfrancois@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4694.

9. Migrants from Haiti going against tide

BY FRED GRIMM

Miami Herald

April 24, 2007

Four weeks ago, I watched as firemen, like pallbearers, carried away the body of an anonymous immigrant who had washed up on Hallandale Beach. Nothing remained of his futile attempt to reach Florida but a tragic irony: If he had survived his journey, he would have been sent to federal lockup to await deportation.

By his actual funeral in Miami on Saturday, Lifaite Lully had become a symbol of the maddening disparity in the treatment of Haitians able to make landfall in the U.S. and the wet-foot dry-foot policy that allows Cubans to stay. Lully's 101 surviving companions have been under arrest since they came ashore.

Two weeks later, 20 Cuban boat people who made it to Miami were paroled the next day.

It was Lully's funeral Saturday, but the eulogies were really about the living, full of demands for justice and equal treatment for Haitian boat people. Down here in South Florida, where local civic and religious leaders rail about the stark unfairness of wet-foot, dry-foot, a change in the policy seems almost inevitable.

COLD NEW ATTITUDE

But we live in a bubble, away from the harshening national attitudes toward leaky borders and undocumented immigrants. Even as ministers at Lifaite Lully's funeral spoke of brutal inequities facing Haitian immigrants, Rudy Giuliani, a one-time champion of immigrant rights, was on the campaign trail in Iowa paying homage to a cold new

attitude. The New York Times reported that Giuliani, in his quest for the Republican presidential nomination, has adopted a hard line toward amnesty for illegal immigrants.

Giuliani and other national political leaders know an unforgiving sentiment on immigration has roiled the country.

Stateline.org reports that so far this year, legislatures in 18 states have passed 57 new laws aimed at employment and benefits available to illegal immigrants. More than 1,100 bills, some stunningly onerous, are still pending. Legislators frustrated with Washington's failure to deal with illegal immigration are taking matters into their own clinched fists.

Arkansas has prohibited the state from doing business with any company that hires illegal immigrants. The Georgia Senate passed a bill forcing judges to investigate defendants' immigration status. Tennessee senators approved a bill requiring employers to verify a worker's immigration status. A bill pending in the Alabama House would allow police to impound illegal immigrants' vehicles. The Texas Legislature may rope local law enforcement into enforcing federal immigration laws. A referendum proposal gaining momentum in Arizona would revoke the business license the first time any company is caught hiring illegal immigrants.

A TURN TO THE MEAN

The climate, outside South Florida and a few other urban enclaves, has turned mean. Even a cheery-sounding USA Today-Gallop poll last week finding 78 percent of respondents approved giving illegal immigrants a path toward citizenship dims on closer examination.

That majority includes 42 percent who would first require illegal immigrants to return to their home country.

That's also reflected in the only immigration reform bill with life in Congress, which would require immigrants to learn English, pay back taxes and go home before they get a shot at legal residence. And that's way too permissive for politicians riding the anti-immigration wave.

It makes talk of a special exception for Haitian boat people seem a little wistful.