

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the Haiti News Briefs for June 20 – 28, 2006

The South Florida newspapers had a slew of coverage over President Preval's visit to the area earlier this week. Three articles were written by Jacqueline Charles of the Miami Herald. Her June 27th article "Aristide supporters expected to be released, Haiti's Preval says" contains two errors related to the case of Former Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune. Charles says that Yvon Neptune "was jailed a year ago" when in fact he has been in prison for two years, since June 2004. Charles also misrepresents his hunger strike as "on and off" when in fact he has been continually on a limited hunger strike.

The major South Florida newspapers covered Preval's Miami visit last weekend. Preval was the featured speaker at the Haitian Tourism and Economic Development Summit in Miami Beach over the weekend. He also hosted a town hall meeting in Liberty City on Sunday night. Preval emphasized road building, a national airline and reducing bureaucratic red tape facilitating new investment and businesses in Haiti. Preval was greeted by a large presence of Aristide supporters and vociferous pressure to release Haiti's political prisoners. Preval reached out to the Florida-based diaspora to help rebuild Haiti and suggested his support for dual nationality for Haitian Americans.

Carol Williams offered a somewhat somber perspective of Haiti's current prospects for peace, security and justice in her Los Angeles Times article. The UN peacekeeping force's spokesman, David Wilmhurst, mentioned concern over Haiti's "return of law and order" citing recent unfreezing of Aristide Foundation bank accounts while failing to mention the new government's challenge in coping with hundreds of political prisoners and other injustices committed by the recently departed Interim Haitian Government authorities. The Times article emphasizes non-Haitian, non-governmental and privatized initiatives over strengthening Haitian institutions and basic services as sustainable approaches to solving Haiti's poverty and under development.

The European Union increased its pledged aid to Haiti from 168 million euros over the 2002-2007 period to 293 million euros from 2008 to 2013. The EU Development Commissioner emphasized support to education and infrastructure projects such as roads. A further tranche will be available if Haiti meets certain targets on good governance.

An upsurge in gang violence and kidnappings was reported by the Associated Press. Brazilian Commander Alberto Barbosa Nascimento reportedly blamed the increase in violence on gangs loyal to Aristide. In the month of May at least 29 kidnappings were reported, nearly double the 15 reported in April, and 10 police officers were killed. Barbosa blames the gangs for using the criminal activity as a strategy to pressure the current government. However, very few kidnappers are actually identified or prosecuted and previous reports indicate kidnappers originate from all levels of Haitian society. It is therefore an excessive overstatement to blame all the increase in violence on gangs loyal to Aristide. International media coverage of a kidnapped Canadian missionary, Ed

Hughes, who was held and released one week later following a ransom payment, punctuated a recent resurgence of violence.

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### **1. Aristide supporters expected to be released, Haiti's Preval says**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**June 27, 2006**

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/14909196.htm>

MIAMI - Two senior supporters of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose imprisonments have been attacked by human rights groups, could soon be freed, Haitian President Rene Preval said Monday.

"The government prosecutor has asked that former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune be released, and the dossier of So Ann should be resolved soon," Preval said in a meeting with a small group of journalists at a downtown Miami hotel.

Neptune, who served under Aristide, was jailed a year ago in connection with a 2004 massacre of Aristide opponents near the western port city of St. Marc.

He has been on and off a hunger strike to protest his detention, saying it is politically motivated.

So Ann, whose real name is Annette Auguste, has been jailed since Mother's Day 2004. A grandmother and singer, she and several other jailed Aristide supporters are accused of participating in a violent 2003 attack on Aristide opponents. Their cases are currently before a Haitian appeals court.

Preval did not provide specifics about how the two cases would be resolved. He pointed out that in recent weeks his government has freed several Aristide supporters who had been jailed by the U.S.-backed interim government that replaced Aristide after his ouster in 2004.

Among those released was former Aristide interior minister Jocelerme Privert. Privert was jailed in April 2004, accused of being the mastermind of the St. Marc massacre. He has filed an appeal and was provisionally released 11 days ago.

One person whose fate remains undecided is the Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, a pro-Aristide and former Miami Haitian rights activist who is facing illegal weapons and conspiracy charges.

He was freed earlier this year to seek cancer treatment in Miami.

International human rights organizations have complained that the interim government jailed scores of Aristide government officials and supporters with little cause, and considered some of them as political prisoners.

Preval arrived in South Florida Sunday and left Monday for Brussels and Paris, where he will be seeking European support for programs to professionalize Haiti's police force and other government-run departments. He is traveling with members of his government, and several Haitian businessmen who are supporting his efforts to stabilize the country.

Preval's presidency has brought a ray of hope for many Haitians who want to see progress in their impoverished homeland.

Still, he faces a litany of challenges including fixing Haiti's corrupt and antiquated justice system.

"The justice system needs to be reformed," he told the journalists Monday. "Not just to encourage investments in the country or go behind criminals and drug dealers but to ensure the security of the population."

"What is important for us today in Haiti is for us to have peace, and it comes through dialogue," he said Monday. "Peace brings stability."

## **2. Ailing Haitian priest urges release of all political prisoners in homeland**

**By Alva James-Johnson**

**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**

**June 27 2006**

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/broward/sfl-prisonersjun27,0,6227565.story?coll=sfla-news-broward>

The Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, the Catholic priest who five months ago left a Haitian prison for cancer treatment in South Florida, called Monday for his nation's government to release all political prisoners.

In an interview with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel just hours after Haitian President Rene Preval left Miami for Brussels, Jean-Juste said hundreds of supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide still remain in prison.

They include the country's former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and other leaders of Aristide's Lavalas Party. Most were arrested two years ago when Aristide's government was toppled in a bloody revolt and replaced by an interim government led by Boca Raton retiree Gerard Latortue, who served as prime minister.

"Many of us Haitians here and in Haiti think the government should go faster because these people were illegally arrested, arbitrarily charged, with no case at all," said Jean-Juste, 60, who lives in Fort Lauderdale with his sister.

Jean-Juste, whom the interim government released for medical treatment, said he was weak from chemotherapy and could not meet with Preval during his visit to South Florida. Jean-Juste said he asked for Neptune's release in a brief telephone conversation with Preval. "He said he's doing his best as the case is in court pending," Jean-Juste said of Preval.

The interim Haitian government arrested Neptune and Jocelerme Privert, Aristide's former interior minister, in 2004 for their alleged involvement in a massacre that year that left more than 50 people dead in the city of St. Marc. Earlier this month, Haitian authorities cleared Privert and released him from jail, according to a British Broadcasting Corp. report.

Jean-Juste said Neptune remains on a hunger strike and in poor health.

Latortue declined to comment. However, in a recent interview with the New York Daily News, Latortue said he was embarrassed that Neptune remains in jail.

Jean-Robert Lafortune, of the Haitian American Grassroots Coalition of Miami, said the issue of political prisoners is problematic for Preval, a former Aristide protégé who received strong support from the former president's supporters. "His leadership is going to be based on his ability to deal with political prisoners in Haiti because this is going to decide whether or not he's going to maintain the support of the Aristide supporters," Lafortune said.

Preval, elected in February, also is going to be tested on the issue of Aristide's return, Lafortune said.

A year ago, Haitian authorities arrested Jean-Juste, suspecting his involvement in the murder of prominent journalist and poet Jacques Roche.

Jean-Juste's imprisonment, his second under the interim government, was condemned by humanitarian organizations, members of the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus and activists around the world.

A judge cleared Jean-Juste of homicide, but he was indicted on weapons possession and criminal conspiracy charges, which he denies.

These days, Jean-Juste spends his days worrying about the imprisoned comrades he left behind. "That is killing me," he said. "I talk to them. I send help to them, and I'm trying to do my best for them."

### **3. Préval seeks help from all Haitians**

**New Haitian leader René Préval visited South Florida in search of Haitian expatriate support and investment.**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**June 26, 2006**

"We need to recognize them as Haitians," Préval said in an interview with The Miami Herald. "We need to have dual nationality."

Préval's statement is perhaps his strongest to date on dual nationality, and an effort by the new leader in Port-au-Prince to draw support from Haitians abroad.

Haiti's 19-year-old constitution does not allow dual citizenship, but Préval suggested change may be in order to include many Haitian Americans who otherwise feel shut out in their attempts to help their troubled homeland.

The issue of dual nationality has become a political football, used by some on the island to keep Haitians who have become naturalized citizens elsewhere out of political decision-making. Expatriate Haitians in the United States and other countries argue that their experience, influence and resources should be tapped to help their homeland, long plagued by political and economic instability. Last year, Haitian Americans sent \$1 billion in remittances to their native homeland.

Préval said he had met on Friday with some opposition leaders in Haiti to discuss the matter, and had asked a leading Haitian constitutionalist to study the possibility of amending the constitution.

### **TOURISM SUMMIT**

Préval was the featured speaker at the three-day Haitian Tourism and Economic Development Summit in Miami Beach that promoted tourism in Haiti. Sunday night, he received an emotional welcome when he hosted a town hall meeting at the Joseph Caleb Auditorium in Liberty City.

But as the estimated 900 Haitians and Haitian Americans clapped and chanted his name, they also called out the name of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a sign that despite Préval's desire to distance himself from the ousted leader, some Haitians still want to bring back Aristide.

Though Préval delivered the same message as he did at the tourism summit, he made a special appeal to the Caleb crowd, saying Haiti needs foreign investments but can't attract them because of kidnapping and crime.

Also, in a show of unity, he pointed out that he was traveling with business executives as well as members of grass-roots organizations that have the stronghold of Aristide's support.

## REACHING OUT

Préval, who is popular with Haiti's poor, made a special effort during his speech to point out the importance of Haiti's economic elite.

"We need investments in the country," he said.

Of Haiti's 112,000 visitors last year, 80 percent of them were Haitian expatriates. Préval said the country must work to increase tourism and return Haiti to its days as a Caribbean vacation destination.

The audience responded to his message with applause.

"It's clear he recognizes the importance of the diaspora," said Haitian-American businessman Pepe Bayard. "And I believe he has the will to do it and to give the diaspora what it needs."

Still, Préval conceded that his plans will take work. The country also needs political stability, security -- and roads.

"Everything cannot happen in one day," he said.

As a result of aid from the international community during the past two years, Haiti will be receiving millions of dollars to help build roads throughout the country.

"I don't see how we can talk about tourism if we don't have comfortable roads," Préval said. "We have to start somewhere. Let's start with the roads."

Plans are also under way for the renovation of the Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien airports.

In the interview with The Miami Herald, Préval reiterated his goals of bringing economic development to Haiti. However, he is currently facing challenges.

Reports of kidnappings and police shootings have recently increased, which some observers say is an indication that gangs have become restless with Préval's government.

#### SECURITY CONCERNS

Préval dismissed the claims of increased violence, saying kidnappings were being staged by a group of "bandits that are taking advantage of the social misery."

He said he is trying to address security issues and noted that he is waiting for parliament to approve his choice for a new police chief.

"We need security, period," Préval said.

While Préval has received high praise for building a coalition government since his February election, Haiti still must hold local elections for mayors and senators.

Préval said he did not know when those elections will take place.

#### **4. Haiti President Préval calls on immigrants in S. Florida to help rebuild homeland** **By Alva James-Johnson** **South Florida Sun-Sentinel** **June 26 2006**

Miami Beach -- Haitian President René Préval reached out to his country's diaspora Sunday, calling on the sons and daughters of the impoverished nation to help rebuild it.

Standing before an audience of about 400 people at the second annual Haiti Tourism Development Summit, the mild-mannered leader spoke with a soft voice, but his message of unity bellowed through the banquet hall at the Deauville Beach Resort.

"It's not up to me to know where I want to go," he said in French, while a translator echoed the words in English. "It's up to all of us to know where we want to go. And wherever we go, we want to go together."

On Sunday, during his first visit to South Florida since his February election, Préval shared the podium with the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, Janet Ann Sanderson, former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, Illinois State Sen. Kwame Raoul and other guests.

A former protégé of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Préval served as the country's president from 1996 to 2001. The declaration that he had won the presidential election earlier this year ended a nine-day electoral crisis. His government replaces a

U.S.-backed interim regime led by Boca Raton retiree Gerard Latortue, installed after Aristide's ouster in 2004.

Gov. Jeb Bush, who was slated to attend the summit, was not present but provided a letter of support for the program. Marie Bell, chairwoman of the governor's Haiti Advisory Committee, said the governor had a scheduling conflict.

Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist, offered peace and security as the only hope for his country and promised to create a safe environment, not only for citizens and visitors but also for investors. He said his government would make tourism a top priority by addressing the need for adequate roads.

Préval said the 4 million Haitians living abroad contribute about \$1.3 billion to the nation's annual economy, representing about 25 percent of its gross national product. They account for 80 percent of the tourism in Haiti and spend \$5 billion as tourists in other Caribbean countries. He said his government hopes to bring that money back to Haiti.

He said the country could blame international financial institutions for Haiti's collapse, "but it's not their fault. It's our fault because we don't have a plan for our own government."

He said Sunday he was developing a 25-year plan to rebuild the country.

Since his election, Préval has appointed a coalition government that includes members of six political parties. Under his leadership, the country has made progress in international relations. CARICOM, the 15-member Caribbean regional group, lifted its suspension of Haiti last month in response to Haiti's return to democratic rule.

Préval is scheduled to give the opening address at the organization's meeting next month in St. Kitts.

He said Sunday he wants to restore faith in Haiti, "faith in justice, faith that when an investor invests in Haiti the rules don't change."

But even as Préval spread hope and optimism, political controversies simmered.

Aristide supporters who backed his election called for the release of many of their comrades who were arrested during the Latortue regime, including former Prime Minister Yvonne Neptune.

"Most of us think there could have been an executive order to let these people out of prison," said Lavarice Guadin, of Veye Yo, the pro-Aristide Lavalas group in Miami. He and other supporters also called for the return of Aristide, who remains exiled in South Africa.

But Guadin said they were willing to be patient and welcomed Préval at a cultural event in Little Haiti later Sunday evening.

"We understand that his government is young at this time and he's still under a lot of pressure," Gaudin said in an interview. "We ask the people to be patient with the new president."

But most who attended the Miami Beach luncheon said they were encouraged by Préval's message.

"I especially like the security part," said Yves Laurent, a West Palm Beach mortgage broker who has a clothing factory in Haiti. "I think he's a trustworthy guy, and I think he will keep his word."

## **5. Haiti's leader offers road map to future**

**By Tania Valdemoro**

**Palm Beach Post**

**Monday, June 26, 2006**

[http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/local\\_news/epaper/2006/06/26/m4b\\_preval\\_0626.html](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/localnews/content/local_news/epaper/2006/06/26/m4b_preval_0626.html)

MIAMI BEACH — Roads are the road to Haiti's future, newly elected President Rene Preval said Sunday.

Visiting South Florida for the first time as Haiti's new leader, Preval said road improvements would be a linchpin to his efforts to revive the country's moribund economy through tourism.

All Haitians at home and abroad know the country's roads are crumbling and often impassible after hurricanes and other natural disasters, he told an audience of more than 400 people at the second annual Haiti Tourism and Economic Development Summit.

"We can't talk about tourism to Haiti if we don't have the roads so tourists can travel," Preval said in French during his keynote speech at the Deauville Beach Resort. "I know people are going to be criticizing us that we should do something else first. We have to start somewhere."

He told people to consider:

- Only 112,000 people visited Haiti last year.
- Haitian expatriates spent \$5 billion visiting other Caribbean nations.
- They send home \$1.3 billion annually, or about 25 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product.

According to a yearly report by the CIA: Haiti's estimated gross domestic product last year was \$4.3 billion. Of the country's 8.3 million people, four out of five live in abject poverty. More than half rely on small-scale farming to survive.

Tourism in Haiti faces other hurdles, Preval said. Haiti needs its own national airline. Haiti also needs to offer a one-stop shop to give investors the information and approvals they need so they can set up their businesses quickly, he said.

People nodded as the president spoke. Their questions kept returning to a familiar and pressing concern: political stability.

At first, Preval did not offer specifics on the issue. Later he said he chose someone to be Haiti's national police chief, but that Parliament hasn't acted on the nomination.

As for another contentious issue — allowing Haitians overseas to vote and run for political office — Preval indicated he is receptive to the idea. Yet, he warned that providing expatriates dual citizenship would require changing the Haitian Constitution, which could take up to eight years.

The president ended his remarks with an appeal for unity: "The country does not belong to me. We need all the social and economic forces to sit down and work together."

After the speech, U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson said she was optimistic.

"I have seen the beginnings of a new democracy in Haiti," she said. "You have a democratically elected president. You have a legislature chosen in an equally open and inclusive election. You have a president who has reached out across the political spectrum to bring everyone in. You have a real sense that people have the opportunity to change their futures.

"That's a good start."

## **Haiti Makes Best of a Tenuous Peace**

**Amid a months-long lull in gang warfare, faint signs of economic life emerge. But in the luckless island nation, expectations are low.**

**By Carol J. Williams**

**Los Angeles Times**

**June 26, 2006**

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-haiti26jun26,1,1431793.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Just a short walk from the gang-ruled slum he calls home, on a street he was afraid to tread less than six months ago, Eligene Mondesir has found the first paying job of his 55-year lifetime.

It's smelly, exhausting work, shoveling garbage from the gutters in the withering tropical heat. But Mondesir, like the 1,750 others hired by a foreign relief group, is grateful for the \$2 daily wage that allows him to feed more than a dozen family members.

In the tenuous peace that has prevailed since Haiti's Feb. 7 presidential election, faint signs of economic life have emerged, offering the first breath of hope in years that Haitians might finally escape decades of desperation.

But this luckless country has been at this crossroads before, and those who have seen their modest dreams of a normal life dashed by violence, misrule and corruption have learned to damp their expectations.

"I'll take it while it lasts," Mondesir says of the street-cleaning job on the volatile airport road — work that will disappear at the first sign of any resumption of gang warfare.

With the election of agronomist Rene Preval, a former ally and protege of exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the kidnapping and killing that had made this capital a war zone ceased as if someone turned off a switch. Why, who and for how long remain questions no one can answer.

Preval has reached out to defeated rivals in putting together a new government and recovery plans. Some see the current calm as a breathing space accorded by skeptical rivals. Others say it is just a pause for assessment of how to manage the new leader.

Gang violence ceased with Preval's election because the gunmen decided to give the new president "the gift of a truce" while they decide whether Preval will interfere with their criminal interests, speculates Mario Andresol, head of the Haitian National Police.

"I'm not too confident about security in this country," he said, pointing to an incident last month in which a Haitian judge freed an accused killer from prison in exchange for \$60,000.

The Brazilian-led U.N. peacekeeping force that has more than 9,000 troops and police in Haiti has responsibility for helping reform the judicial system, mission spokesman David Wimhurst said. But the more the world body's civilian advisory team learns about crime and justice here, the more it despairs of the near future.

"Those who don't want a return of law and order can stir things up so easily," Wimhurst said.

He pointed to recent judicial manipulations that lifted a freeze on Aristide Foundation bank accounts long enough for millions to be withdrawn by the former leader's exiled allies. The accounts had been frozen to allow investigation into allegations that the money was illegally transferred from state coffers. The head of the corruption investigation who sought to thwart the withdrawal was jailed for a week on another judge's order.

"The judicial system is not just corrupt, it's fallen to pieces," Wimhurst said.

How much control over the police and courts Haiti's new leaders are willing to cede to U.N. officials is unclear. A proposal by the mission to pair every Haitian judge with an overseeing foreign counterpart has been met with a hail of protests as a denigration of Haitian sovereignty.

John Currelly, who heads the Pan American Development Foundation's Clean Streets project that Mondesir works for, says of the postelection peace, "It is absolutely only a lull."

The only way to entrench stability, says the Haiti veteran who was kidnapped for ransom a year ago, is to improve the standard of living and demonstrate to Haitians that there is a dignified means of surviving without resorting to the gun.

The suspension of violent clashes in the slums of Port-au-Prince has allowed some progress in efforts to alleviate suffering among Haiti's poorest.

"It certainly helps us a lot. There are a lot less restrictions on our movements" now that it's safe for medical relief workers to get into areas previously off limits because of security hazards, said Karoline Fonck, the Pan American Health Organization country officer for HIV/AIDS programs.

But others warn that the postelection peace is as orchestrated as the violence was.

"The roots of the problems haven't been tackled yet — that being the extreme misery of poverty in this country and the armed groups who still have their weapons," said Paul Denis, a leader of the Struggling People's Organization, a rival political movement to Preval's, but one that has joined the president's governing coalition. "These gangs are

armed and waiting. Just as the violence was turned off by someone's order, so can it be turned on again at a moment's notice."

Analysts note that the key to economic improvement must come from the private sector. But most concede a longer period of calm will be needed to lure back investors chased away over the last 15 years of populism and political violence.

One exception that has brought swift change on the business landscape was the May launch of a new cellular phone network that broke a cozy duopoly enjoyed by companies now forced to compete.

Not only has the new company's \$130-million investment nearly doubled the number of Haitians with access to communications, it has created 350 jobs, expects 700 employees by mid-summer and has franchised 220 outlets across the country.

Preval's recently installed prime minister, Jacques-Edouard Alexis, says he knows he's running against a clock.

Noting that organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development are already fashioning projects to spend pledged foreign aid, Alexis said he wanted the donors to respond to what the government considers priority projects. The urban needs may be more apparent to foreign visitors, but Alexis wants the roads, schools and conditions for agriculture and small business first addressed in the countryside. That would stem the flow of people into the capital, where the vast majority live in miserable shantytowns without jobs or access to food, power or running water, he said.

"We have to develop the countryside so people will stay there," Alexis said. "We can encourage the assembly sector to create factories in the provinces and jump-start agriculture so we can produce more of our own food and at lower prices."

The Bush administration has assured Preval that aid and assistance will flow to this country to ensure that recovery can get underway and the tentative peace can be firmed up with a tangible improvement in living standards.

"We in the United States understand that our commitment here, our engagement, has to be long term," said a senior U.S. diplomat who declined to be identified. "We have at times had a short attention span on Haiti."

The mood on the streets is one of deep skepticism.

"It's good for now. No one can say about tomorrow," said Jean Leger Jean-Baptiste, a 42-year-old who lives in the squalid Cite Soleil neighborhood.

Claudette Pierre, a 32-year-old with four children and an ailing mother to support on the few pennies she makes a day selling candy, looked confused when asked what she expects can be accomplished if peace endures through the summer.

"The future is something we've never had time to think about," she said.

## **7. EU raises Haiti aid, backs Preval,**

**Reuters**

**June 27, 2006**

Brussels - The European Union announced an increase in development aid for Haiti on Tuesday, in a show of support for visiting President Rene Preval and his newly elected government.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said EU aid to the troubled Caribbean nation would rise to 233 million euros (\$293 million) for the 2008-13 period from the 168 million set aside to cover 2002-7.

"We think developments are in the right direction," Barroso told a news conference after talks with Preval in Brussels.

EU Development Commissioner Louis Michel said the money would go towards education and infrastructure projects such as roads. A further tranche of aid would be made available if Haiti reached targets on good governance, he said.

A new Haitian government was sworn in earlier this month to replace the team of outgoing Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, put in place after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was pushed from office by a bloody rebellion in 2004.

Preval, a one-time Aristide protege, rode support from Aristide's supporters in the slums to victory in the Feb. 7 presidential election.

"The most important thing now is up to the Haitians themselves -- good governance," said Preval.

## **8. 2 Caribbean leaders seek favor in S. Fla.**

**By Jacqueline Charles**

**Miami Herald**

**June 22, 2006**

Town hall meetings

They were elected within weeks of each other, rallying support from the poorest of the poor in their poverty-stricken countries.

Now after making history, both of these Caribbean leaders are headed to South Florida to curry favor with some of their most influential citizens abroad.

In separate inaugural state visits this week, both Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller and Haitian President René Préval will make tracks to Miami-Dade and Broward counties, the bedrock of South Florida's sprouting Caribbean community.

"To have two new heads of state visiting South Florida is a testament to the maturity of these immigrant communities," said Marlon Hill, a Miami attorney who recently was elected to represent the southern United States on the Jamaican government's diaspora advisory board.

In South Florida, home to nearly 400,000 Caribbean nationals, Jamaicans and Haitians are quickly emerging into a power bloc, transforming the political, cultural and economic landscapes of once predominantly white cities.

In Miami-Dade, where Haitians are the second-largest nationality after Cubans, Haitian Americans have been elected to the Legislature, the judiciary and three city councils. Last year, Gov. Jeb Bush appointed the first Haitian American, Dr. M. Rony Francois, to head a state agency, the Health Department.

In Broward, where Jamaicans are leading the black and Caribbean growth, five cities boast Jamaican-American elected officials. A Jamaican American also sits on the South Miami City Council.

That growing clout and influence is not lost on either Simpson Miller or Préval, both of whom received considerable moral and financial support from local émigrés during their recent political bids -- and are beefing up efforts to reach out to their diaspora communities in hopes that their expatriates' talent, money and influence will make a difference in their troubled Caribbean homelands. "The government wants full integration of the diaspora in the life of the country," said Jean Geneus, Haiti's minister for Haitians living abroad. "They are going to find in the government a partner to carry out such projects."

In South Florida, both Préval and Simpson Miller will find a community eager to play a role in nation-building beyond the \$1 billion Haitians and Jamaicans living in the United States each sent back last year.

"Even though we are in the diaspora, we want to establish that although we are not there in the island, we have not forgotten where we came from," said George Pedlar, president of Broward's Caribbean American Democratic Club, said about the visits. "This is a good sign they are recognizing this rather than just giving lip service as before."

The first of the two to visit, Simpson Miller arrives this evening when she will be shuttled off to a private reception, followed by an invitation-only breakfast with international bankers before hosting a Friday evening town hall meeting at Nova Southeastern University in Davie.

Préval comes on Sunday. He will give the keynote luncheon speech at the second annual Haiti Tourism and Economic Development Summit in Miami Beach, followed by a community meeting later at the Joseph Caleb Auditorium in Liberty City.

Both leaders arrive here armed with similar agendas -- and problems.

Simpson Miller's approval rating has dropped since she was elected by delegates of the People's National Party in Jamaica to replace outgoing party president and Prime Minister P.J. Patterson. The party has not recovered from the divisive race, and the friction is overshadowing Simpson Miller's desire to call general elections to extend her term. Meanwhile, despite a recent 20 percent drop in the murder rate, crime remains a problem. Amnesty International recently criticized the government for not doing enough to prevent an increase in violence against women and children.

As for Préval, many Haitians remain hopeful about his presidency and willingness to include opposition groups in his Cabinet. However, the continued jailing of supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and a recent spate of police killings and kidnappings could threaten his plans to attract foreign investment and tourism.

## **9. UN troops face surge of gang violence in Haiti slums**

**The Jamaica Observer**

**AP**

**Monday, June 26, 2006**

[http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/html/20060625T180000-0500\\_107797\\_OBS\\_UN\\_TROOPS\\_FACE\\_SURGE\\_OF\\_GANG\\_VIOLENCE\\_IN\\_HAITI\\_SLUMS\\_.asp](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/html/20060625T180000-0500_107797_OBS_UN_TROOPS_FACE_SURGE_OF_GANG_VIOLENCE_IN_HAITI_SLUMS_.asp)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - An upsurge in gang violence has led UN troops to increase patrols and checkpoints in the volatile Haitian capital, a commander with the Brazilian-led peacekeeping mission said yesterday.

Brazilian Commander Alberto Barbosa Nascimento told The Associated Press that gangs loyal to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide were responsible for the recent surge in shootings and kidnappings in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Haiti had been relatively calm since the February 7 election of President Rene Preval, but a rise in kidnappings and attacks on police and UN peacekeepers in recent weeks has raised fears of a flare-up of violence similar to the mayhem following a 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide.

## **10. Kidnapping drives Canadian missionary from Haiti**

**CNN.com**

**June 27, 2006**

<http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/americas/06/27/kidnapped.missionary.ap/>

A Canadian missionary who was kidnapped for a week and released when a ransom was paid has left Haiti, saying he was unsure if he would return but vowing to keep his orphanage running.

Ed Hughes told The Associated Press that he would like to stay but believes he must leave so he doesn't again become targeted by kidnapping gangs that are behind a surge of abductions in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

"I don't know what to do and I don't have an answer as to when I am coming back to Haiti," Hughes said before boarding a flight to Canada.

His voice trembling and his eyes tearing up, the 72-year-old Hughes said he was leaving to protect his orphanage, which has barely enough money to feed nearly 150 children and send another 80 to school -- not to pay ransom demands.

"They have to understand this or else they will always try to kidnap me again or harm my children," he said. "These are the poorest children in the world and they don't need any more trouble."

The missionary said he paid a ransom of \$2,000, but one of his employees stole the money and his supporters had to come up with another \$2,000 for his release.

The employee who took money is in jail, he said.

## **11. Kidnapped Canadian Released in Haiti**

**By MYRNA DOMIT**

**The Associated Press**

**Monday, June 26, 2006**

<http://www.caycompass.com/cgi-bin/CFPnews.cgi?ID=1014352>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A Canadian missionary kidnapped in a surge of politically motivated gang violence has been released after a week in captivity.

Ed Hughes, 72, was abducted from his home north of Port-au-Prince on June 18. His captors

Nelson Ryman, who runs an orphanage in Haiti with Hughes, said the missionary was released Saturday night on a rural road after the kidnappers received a ransom raised by his friends and colleagues.

Ryman said the ransom was less than \$10,000 but would not give the exact amount. Police and U.N. officials worked through a Haitian mediator to secure Hughes' release.

Hughes was put on a "tap-tap," a pickup truck used as a collective taxi, but for some reason tried to jump out and hurt his head, Ryman said.

He made it back to the capital early Sunday and was resting at a safe location in Port-au-Prince.

"He called me in the morning and was extremely disoriented," Ryman said from his home in Tampa, Fla. "A bit later I talked to him again and he said he plans to return to his children in the orphanage."

Hughes was shot and badly wounded in the arm in December 2005 trying to stop the abduction of Haitian-American missionary Daniel Phelusmar, who was held for four days.

A surge in gang violence has led U.N. troops to increase patrols and checkpoints in the volatile Haitian capital, a commander with the Brazilian-led peacekeeping mission said Sunday.

Brazilian Commander Alberto Barbosa Nascimento blamed gangs loyal to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide for the increase in crime.

At least 29 people were kidnapped in Haiti's capital last month, up from 15 in April, the mission says.

The well-armed gangs also have killed 10 Haitian police officers since May in an effort to intimidate the nation's ill-equipped security forces, police say.

The violence has raised fears of a repeat of the mayhem that followed a 2004 revolt that toppled Aristide, now in exile in South Africa. Haiti had been relatively calm since the Feb. 7 election of President Rene Preval.

"Attacks by gang members had decreased in recent months because they expected President Preval's government to bring back Aristide. This has not been the case, so the recent attacks serve as a strategy to pressure the current government," Barbosa said.

Barbosa said violence also has escalated because gangs in the sprawling slums of Port-au-Prince need money after several months of relative quiet.