

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for November 14-16, 2006.

Three Miami Herald articles by Jacqueline Charles typify biased mainstream coverage of Haiti. Charles and the Herald refused to even mention credible human rights reports published throughout the Latortue dictatorship by the University of Miami, Loyola and Harvard Law Schools, by IJDH, Amnesty International, the National Lawyers Guild and several others and the mortality study report published in the British Lancet medical journal (all available on [www.ijdh.org](http://www.ijdh.org)). Now, six months after the return of democracy, Charles and the Herald feature a report from the National Human Rights Defence Network (RNDDH, formerly NCHR-Haiti) citing a ‘catastrophic human rights situation’ of that same period. RNDDH, which is funded by the US and Canadian governments, had a formal collaboration agreement with the Latortue dictatorship’s prosecutors, and was cited in several human rights reports for identifying targets for repression. RNDDH’s former parent organization, NCHR-New York, asked it to change its name because of its association with political persecution. Charles refers to RNDDH as an “independent human rights group.” The Herald article notes that RNDDH concedes there were human rights problems under the Latortue dictatorship, but RNDDH reports much lower numbers than any of the other reports.

An AP/South Florida Sun Sentinel article offers some glimmer of hope. This story reports on some small but measurable successes by the Preval/Alexis government: “passed a budget, begun to collect taxes, raised \$750 million in foreign aid and launched a campaign to disarm gangsters.” Other positive indicators: falling inflation, increase in remittances from Haitians abroad and a 2.5 % expected growth rate this year. Stevenson Jacobs repeats the old mantra that “gangs loyal to Aristide launched a wave of killings and kidnappings aimed at destabilizing a U.S.-backed interim government,” not mentioning widespread angry protests by the masses of people desiring a return of democratic leadership. Gangs, and more shocking, police authorities and wealthy Petionville residents, have been directly implicated in spearheading large networks organized for kidnapping. Articles such as this emphasize that continuing to focus on repressing poor Haitians is the answer, while Jacobs cited several indicators of improvement due to simple, good and honest, elected government and preventing the UN from all out attacks on unarmed civilians.

The AP/International Herald Tribune article “Haitian police commander resigns after ignoring arrest warrant” reports the refusal of Inspector General Michael Lucius of the Haitian National Police to appear before a judge on charges of involvement in kidnappings. Most notably, the article offers a more accurate description that “most of the crimes have been blamed on street gangs—including some loyal to Aristide—but corrupt police have also been implicated.”

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**1. Rights failures of Haiti transition government are detailed**

**An independent Haitian group's report criticized Haiti's former U.S.-backed interim government on human rights.**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**November 15, 2006**

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/16013227.htm>

From the prolonged jailing of thousands of Haitians to the nearly 2,000 killed under its watch, the U.S.-backed interim government that led the country following the 2004 ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide failed to protect the rights of the country's people, according to a report Tuesday.

"Even if it is true that this government did not commit crimes of a political character like the former regime, one is forced to admit that it failed in its obligation to protect the rights of everyone," the Port-au-Prince-based National Human Rights Defense Network said in the report.

The independent group's report examines the situation in Haiti following Aristide's ouster amid a bloody rebellion to June 2006, when the country's newly elected legislature swore in new cabinet ministers.

The report points out that during the two years interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, a Boca Raton resident, and interim President Boniface Alexandre governed Haiti, hundreds of Haitians were jailed, close to 2,000 were killed in "assassinations" and the country experienced a rash of kidnappings and rapes.

"The general human rights situation under the administration of the transitional government was catastrophic," the report says.

Latortue, contacted by The Miami Herald, said he would not comment on the report but added, ``This government never attacked a political leader or the press, but they never mention that.''

Latortue was appointed in March 2004 and promised to return security to the troubled Caribbean nation, revamp a police force that had just about collapsed and reconcile the country's bitterly divided political factions.

"They didn't do anything to improve the situation," said Pierre Esperance, executive director of the human rights group. ``They were implicated in the corruption, too."

Before leaving office, Latortue announced a broad probe into allegations of official corruption. At one point, several judges were placed under investigation for allegedly accepting thousands of dollars in bribes to grant bail to jailed kidnapping suspects.

The investigation into the interim government continues amid promises by President René Préval to tackle corruption. A group in the legislature is investigating the ministry of foreign affairs, and the High Court of Accounts and Administrative Disputes is also conducting probes.

## **2. Crime wave provokes vigilante killings in Haiti village**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**November 14, 2006**

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/16005895.htm>

As a crime spree hit a small Haitian village this summer, residents struck back and lynched two suspects.

PLICHE, Haiti - The peasants bound the wrists of the neighbor they suspected of two murders in this remote mountain village, and herded him to the side of a deserted dirt road.

As the man wept, they grilled him about his alleged crimes. Then they handed him a shovel, forced him to dig his own grave and hacked him to death with machetes and picks.

"It was a lot of blows," recalled Renold Cherestant, 34, a Pliché resident and radio reporter who witnessed the lynching, one of two in this region in late July of alleged gang leaders suspected of leading a months long crime spree.

The killings illustrate not only the growing outrage of Haitians with the illegal armed gangs that have long terrorized the capital city of Port-au-Prince, but the vulnerability of even remote and usually peaceful parts of this troubled Caribbean nation.

It also points to the challenges facing President René Préval, six months in power, as he struggles to return security to a country with a small and ineffective police force, dysfunctional justice system and decades of political and economic upheavals.

In the past two years, an unprecedented spate of for-ransom kidnappings and other violent crimes has transformed life in the capital, where private security firms now flourish and well-to-do businessmen and government officials ride in bullet-proof vehicles with armed guards.

"What people want is peace," said Brinó Benice, 50, who moved from Port-au-Prince to Pliché in hopes of finding the security that eludes both rich and poor in the capital.

``There are areas in the country that are still peaceful, but there are areas where we are seeing increased violence."

Benice and others in the Pliché area believe their recent crime wave is related to a summer spike in violence in Port-au-Prince that forced the Haitian government and U.N. peacekeepers to beef up security in the capital. Neighbors said the two Pliché lynch victims ran groups of young thugs who moved from the capital.

#### U.N. FORCE

Scores of blue-helmeted U.N. troops were redeployed from the countryside to the capital to help bolster the National Police, 32 additional street checkpoints were established and 11 more armored vehicles were sent to patrol the capital, said Edmond Mulet, overall head of the U.N. mission here.

The focused attention appears to be paying off. Police have entered previously no-go parts of Cité Soleil, the capital's main slum and stronghold of gangs well armed from the spoils of Haiti's political upheavals. Kidnappings are trending down, and a campaign to disarm the gang members has netted about 110 people who turned in guns in exchange for food grants and job training.

But there remain occasional clashes between U.N. peacekeepers and residents in Cité Soleil, as well as street protests by university students opposed to the presence here of some 9,000 U.N. military and police personnel. Friday night, gunmen killed two Jordanian peacekeepers.

"This is still a very fragile situation; it's wait-and-see," Mulet said.

Préval says the September lynching of a suspected kidnapper in the Port-au-Prince slum of Bel-Aire, and the two in Pliché, show Haitians are fed up with the ``weakness of the justice system."

"If there was a justice system, it would not have arrived at this point," he told The Miami Herald in an interview.

But fixing the problems won't be easy.

The National Police claims it has 7,476 agents -- others estimate 4,000 -- in the nation of eight million. New York City, which has the same number of residents, has 37,000 police officers.

All agree that police are under-equipped, poorly trained and often corrupt.

A report last week by the Washington-based International Crisis Group (ICG), an independent think tank monitoring Haiti, called for vetting police officers and urged the U.N. force here be expanded from 1,700 to 1,900 officers and include anti-gang, SWAT and organized crime experts.

It also noted that millions of dollars have been spent in the past decade on reforming Haiti's justice system, still mired in corruption and a huge backlog of cases. Meanwhile, the country's laws are antiquated and the judges are underpaid.

"You cannot do a stand-alone police reform. You have to do it parallel to a justice reform so when the police do pick up people for violating the law, there is a judiciary that is going to deal with the cases on the merits and not based on who knows whom, or who paid whom," said ICG Haiti analyst Mark Schneider.

Crime, he added, is not going to go away. But the government can restore the population's faith so that ``they can look at the police and the justice system as the answer."

The residents of Pliché, 85 miles southwest of the capital, know all too well the reality of Haiti's understaffed police force. When the crime spree in their village began, they say, they met with police and a government prosecutor.

"The insecurity was bad. The people could not sleep at home, they were afraid. They could not come to church," said The Rev. Ignace Coissy, a Catholic priest who took part in the meetings.

#### PATROL REQUESTED

Residents asked for a police patrol in the Pliché area and perhaps even their own police station. They were told neither was possible.

"I don't have a car, a motorcycle or even a bicycle," said Tertilian Adelson, the officer in charge of the police station in Cavaillon, responsible for Pliché and its surroundings. Cavaillon is a several-hours walk from Pliché on a mountain road.

"There are times I borrow money, or take my own money to borrow a motorcycle to go to the mountain to check on the population," Adelson said, adding that his station has only six officers, including himself.

Adelson, who confirmed the two vigilante killings in Pliché, said that after the incidents authorities immediately opened an investigation. It has gone nowhere, he said.

"They've hidden the information," he said. ``They are afraid to talk. They believe if they talk, there will be arrests and the bandits will return."

Residents say one of the men lynched was a prison escapee known as Theophile. He and the other victim, known as Rigaud, led several gunmen. In the killings' aftermath, other gang members have left and peace has returned to this cocoa and coffee farming community.

But Coissy, the priest, cautioned that the situation can quickly change.

"It's a dynamite that can explode at anytime," he said. "The situation in the country is out of control. The misery, the crime. Things like this will happen more and more as long as people's conditions don't improve."

### **3. Haiti business climate is `getting worse'**

**Factory closings and job losses underscore the grim reality of Haiti's economy as business owners and middle-class families continue to flee abroad.**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**November 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Six days a week Laula Jean eked out a living inspecting hems and sweatshirts in a sprawling garment factory near one of this city's most volatile slums.

"I enjoyed what I was doing," said Jean, 31, who supported herself and her mother on her \$121 a month salary at the A.G. Textiles factory.

But three weeks ago she became the latest casualty of Haiti's weakening economy when the factory closed and she joined the millions of others in this desperately poor nation without a paycheck.

"I've been looking, but I can't find anything," Jean said.

Georges Sassine, owner of A.G. Textiles and vice president of the Haitian manufacturer's association, says he shuttered his factory after 35 years under much the same pressures that closed 15 others in the last two years and cost 5,000 jobs.

These include the political turmoil of 2004 that led to the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, steep loan interest rates and global competition. The street violence prevalent in the capital has made an impact too: Six of Sassine's workers were wounded on the job when gunfire interrupted in the neighboring slum.

The final straw: His main client, Canada's Gildan Activewear, temporarily cut back orders, costing Sassine \$12,300 in lost income per week.

The closings and job losses underscore the grim reality of Haiti's economy as business owners and middle-class families continue to flee abroad. Those left behind say they are steadily losing the fight to stay afloat after years of political instability, violence and negative economic growth.

## 'A ROUGH TIME'

"We are going through a rough time," said Maxime Condé, 55, who added that his own company may soon become the fourth factory to close in three months. His factory, which makes hospital scrubs for a Florida company, has gone from 1,000 workers to 200 in the last two years.

Haiti's apparel assembly industry, largely using U.S. textiles for duty-free export to the U.S. market, once employed 100,000 and had replaced agriculture as the nation's economic backbone. Today, it employs 20,659, reports the Association of Haitian Industrialists. Yet it is still viewed by some as the key to reviving Haiti's economy, if the country can get trade preferences from Washington more beneficial than those it currently enjoys under the 24-year-old Caribbean Basin Initiative.

Haiti's apparel exports to the United States rose from \$328.8 million in 2004 to \$405.8 million last year. But businessmen here say the increase results from changing the way of measuring the value of the goods rather than any export growth.

A U.S. bill giving Haiti duty-free access to the U.S. market for clothes made here with fabric from third countries has languished in the U.S. Congress for two years, opposed by textile groups that argue it will cost U.S. jobs. A delegation of Haitians and Haitian Americans hopes to push Congress to approve the so-called HOPE bill during the session that began Monday.

"While we've been diddling, a terrible economy has gotten worse," said former Florida Sen. Bob Graham, an original sponsor of the Senate version that passed in 2004.

Graham, who recently visited Haiti as part of a four-member assessment team, said "Préval has got the same problem Franklin D. Roosevelt had in 1933. He's got a country in deep economic and psychological depression, and he needs to show some immediate action that will be seen by the Haitian people as signs of improvement in their lives."

Incoming House Ways and Means Chairman Charles Rangel, D-NY, has said he wants HOPE to pass in the lame duck session. But Haiti will first have to get the support of the legislation's opponents, and it will have to compete for attention with all the other trade bills the Bush administration is pushing. Even if HOPE does pass, it's not a panacea for Haiti.

"Countries tend to think that passage of these trade measures alone in the U.S. is enough to revive their economies," said Daniel Erikson of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank in Washington D.C. "The reality is a lot of work on the ground has to be done. That is especially true in Haiti."

Critics say HOPE would quickly outlive its usefulness in the fast-paced world of globalization.

## STAYING COMPETITIVE

Despite its wealth of cheap labor, Haiti still needs to address a host of other problems -- security, stable electricity and good roads among them -- to make itself truly competitive.

Haiti's economy is indeed improving. Inflation has dramatically decreased, though still high at 13 percent. Government revenues are up, and the International Monetary Fund projects the economy will grow 2.5 percent this year, up from 1.8 percent in 2005.

But that growth, said Haitian economist Pierre-Marie Boisson, is not being generated by private investments but mainly by the \$1 billion in remittances Haitians living abroad sent back last year to relatives. While it helps send kids to school and keeps food in the stomach, it also fuels inflation as domestic production lags.

The same \$200 wire transfer from the States three years ago buys much less today because "prices have gone up by 60 percent while the gourdes [Haiti's currency] has kept the same parity with the U.S. dollar," said Boisson, who runs Sogesol, the microlending affiliate of Haiti's largest commercial bank.

All of this creates a bleak reality for people like Ketlie Civil, whose job of five years at A.G. Textiles allowed her to temporarily rise out of the 78 percent of Haitians who live on less than \$2 a day.

"When you have a job, you wake up in the morning and you know you have a job to go to. You know you will be able to eat and drink that day," said the 43-year-old mother of two. Like the overwhelming number of Haitians who voted for President René Préval, Civil believed life would have vastly improved by now.

She was hopeful when he and Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis spoke of wanting to create jobs; and she was optimistic when they vowed to tackle the lawlessness that has scared many entrepreneurs out of Haiti.

But like millions here, Civil is still waiting.

If things are moving slow, it's because "everything is a priority," said Alexis, adding the government has created a clearinghouse to help investors, sent out tax letters to collect \$525 million in revenue and approved a \$1.6 billion budget.

He acknowledged his government has ``to help the private sector to change, to become more progressive so they can see the advantages of investing in their country.''

In Haiti, the loss of one salaried job can have a catastrophic ripple effect for the 80 percent of people who work in the informal economy such as street vending.

"I don't know what I am going to do. I am just waiting," said Ademene Charles, 43, who used to offer daily home-cooked chicken and rice specials to the A.G. Textiles workers from a makeshift kiosk nearby.

Today, A.G. Textiles is a lifeless building.

"I haven't dismantled the factory, just in case HOPE passes," said Sassine.

#### **4. Small steps help pull Haiti back from the brink**

**By Stevenson Jacobs**

**The Associated Press**

**South Florida Sun Sentinel**

**November 16, 2006**

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/caribbean/sfl-haitisteps16nov16,0,2816137.story?coll=sfl-news-caribbean>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti · Young men with pistols roam the fetid slums of Haiti's capital, but now many are looking for jobs instead of victims. Children in checkered uniforms walk to school on dusty streets where stray bullets used to whiz past.

Five months into Haiti's latest attempt at democracy, small but important improvements have pulled the Caribbean nation from the brink of collapse. Perhaps most notably, an unprecedented wave of kidnappings finally seems to be leveling off.

A year ago, Haiti was engulfed in violence that began with the February 2004 rebel uprising that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Hundreds, possibly thousands, died in almost daily clashes among well-armed gangs, former rebels, rogue police and U.N. peacekeepers.

Today, a new government led by elected President René Préval has passed a budget, begun to collect taxes, raised \$750 million in foreign aid and launched a campaign to disarm hundreds of gangsters.

The economy is starting to show small but encouraging signs of life. Double-digit inflation that soared after the revolt is starting to fall, while vital cash sent home by Haitians working abroad has increased and overall growth is expected to reach 2.5 percent this year.

"It's a very different place today," U.S. Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson said.

"There are some real accomplishments and some real things that, when looked at over a year, are encouraging."

Peace and stability are far from assured. Huge challenges remain, from employing slum dwellers and rebuilding shattered infrastructure, to equipping Haiti's police.

"This is a country where almost everything is broken," Sanderson said.

A drive across the capital, along streets cratered with giant potholes, underscores her point.

Street children with swollen bellies beg for money, crying "I'm hungry" in Creole as they cluster around stopped cars. Few Haitians have electricity or running water. Jobs are scarce. Acrid black smoke rises day and night from burning tires thrown on trash heaps.

Haiti ranked 153rd of 177 countries in the United Nations' most recent report on global quality of life, behind Sudan and Zimbabwe and ahead of countries including Nigeria, Congo and Sierra Leone. A recent World Bank report lists Haiti as one of 26 states at risk of collapse.

But buoyed by its modest progress, the government is wooing foreign investors, even touting Haiti as a Caribbean vacation spot.

"There is some kind of window of opportunity and the sense of stability that the country has some future," said Edmond Mulet, the U.N. special envoy to Haiti.

"It's still a fragile situation. I wouldn't say we've turned a corner yet, but I think in the next months we'll be able to assume that, hopefully."

The key will be security.

After the revolt, gangs loyal to Aristide launched a wave of killings and kidnappings aimed at destabilizing a U.S.-backed interim government, which was accused of persecuting Aristide supporters. Everyone was a potential victim, including foreign missionaries, security guards and even former first lady Lucienne Heurtelou Estime, an elderly widow shot dead at a jewelry store in May.

The number of reported kidnappings fell from about 80 in August to half that last month, Mulet said. Officials attribute the decrease to government-led negotiations with gangs and increased police and U.N. patrols.

Last month the government unveiled a U.N.-administered program to disarm up to 1,000 low-level gangsters in exchange for food grants, civics courses and training for such jobs as mechanics and electricians.

So far, 109 Haitians have been enrolled, Mulet said, and dozens of weapons recovered.

But gang leaders wanted for murder and other serious crimes aren't eligible for the program, and Haitians fear gang members will return to kidnapping if they don't get jobs, which are scarce.

## **5. Haitian police commander resigns after ignoring arrest warrant**

**The Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**November 15, 2006**

[http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/11/15/news/CB\\_GEN\\_Haiti\\_Police\\_Commander.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/11/15/news/CB_GEN_Haiti_Police_Commander.php)

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PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: A top Haitian police commander who has refused to appear before a judge to face a charge of involvement in kidnappings has resigned as head of his division, police said Wednesday.

Inspector General Michael Lucius, who led an office that investigates kidnappings and other serious crimes, quit his post Tuesday and will be transferred to another unit, police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said.

Last month, a judge indicted Lucius for allegedly conspiring with kidnappers and ordered his arrest. Lucius denied the charge and refused to surrender to authorities. He alleged that the judge, Napela Saintil, was biased against him — a charge Saintil denied.

Kidnapping for ransom flourished in the capital of Port-au-Prince after a February 2004 revolt ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the impoverished Caribbean country's first democratically elected leader. Most of the crimes have been blamed on street gangs — including some loyal to Aristide — but corrupt police have also been implicated.

Lucius' refusal to answer the kidnapping charge has tested a weak justice system already hobbled by corruption, chronic case backlogs and lack of funds.

He told reporters he stepped down to prevent his case from becoming "a handicap for the work of the legal and police institutions."

But Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said the government asked Lucius to resign "so that justice can be restored to this case." He said Saintil had also been removed from the case, opening the door for a new judge to be assigned.

"This crisis has advanced sufficiently to oblige the government to intervene," Alexis told reporters.

Reached for comment, Lucius said "it was my personal decision" to resign, but added that "maybe the government wanted me to take that decision."

Earlier this week, Port-au-Prince prosecutor Claudy Gassant called Lucius a "fugitive" and vowed to arrest him.

Lucius said he's "ready to answer all the questions of the judicial system" now that a new judge will replace Saintil, whom he accused of seeking to discredit him on behalf of drug and arms traffickers and money launderers.

"I think he has some people behind him. My position is difficult in that it gives me many, many enemies ... because I have some sensitive information," Lucius said by phone, declining to give details.

Saintil wasn't immediately available for comment.

The post held by Lucius has been marked by high turnover, with 10 people holding the position since it was created in 1997. Lucius was appointed to the job in March 2004.