

**Haiti: Human Rights Situation - February 2005**  
**Cite Soleil: A wretched forgotten land**  
**February 18, 2005**

Two months after UN troops forced their way inside Cite Soleil in a bid to defuse the internal strife that gripped the area, the human rights situation there is still very critical.

**Security Situation**

On February 14, yet another fight between rival gangs left at least one person dead and several others wounded by gunshots. The fight came by after it is alleged a resident of the Boston locality, Rosemond, was killed by gunshot in another locality on the previous day.

In reprisal for the killing, the gang based in Boston crossed the warlike zone that delimits Boston and rival localities to attack. Indiscriminate shootings resulted in the killing of one resident of Soley 9, Emmanuel. Natalie, a frail little girl of approximately 10 years old (neither Natalie nor a family friend knew her exact age) was hit and wounded in the head. She has only received basic treatment. Her mother was killed in a previous attack from the same gang based in Boston. Now orphans, she and her three siblings have been left to care for themselves.



Natalie was hit by a flying bullet on February 14, 2005.

The security situation deteriorated in the area after September 30<sup>th</sup> last year when intensive fights between the two factions erupted. On that day, one notorious gang leader and a pro-Lavalas activist as well as innocent bystanders were killed. Since then, Cite Soleil has been divided in two distinct rival neighborhoods.

To this day the exact number of human rights abuses committed in Cite Soleil is still unknown but believed to be very high. Fights between the two rival factions have resulted in scores of killings and other violent crimes including widespread rape. Those abuses have resulted in the displacement of several thousands of persons causing a humanitarian crisis that has to this day not been acknowledged by any authority or other agency in the country. Although political rivalry between the two factions is often cited as a cause for the commission of these abuses, common criminality is also a main factor.



February 17, 2005: a usually busy road across Cite Soleil, deserted.

On December 14, UN troops stormed the area to restore order and has since been stationed there. But their presence is limited to two stations patrolling one or two main roads across the whole neighborhoods, leaving many other areas exposed.

Although intensive fights between the two groups have decreased since the UN got in, violence still grips the daily lives of residents. Exiting or entering Cite Soleil, or even to circulate inside, is still fraught with dangers. Armed civilians regularly patrol the different localities in the area, often with the tacit consent of residents who see them as their only means of protection from the other side. Sporadic gunfire is often shot during the day, leaving residents to fear another prospective fight between the rival gangs. According to residents, many criminal acts are still being committed under the cover of the night.

To this day there is still no police station operating inside the area.

### **Health Situation**

The sick and wounded, of whom many children and old persons, abound in Cite Soleil. Everywhere one goes, there is always someone in dire need of medical assistance.



M.M. Gabriel (10) shot on December 14, 2004 when UN troops stormed Cite Soleil. She has been asked SHD 4000 to pay for an urgently needed operation .

Both victims with gunshot wounds and those who suffer from other ailments cannot obtain the necessary treatment for lack of economic means or simply because they cannot leave the area. For male and young gunshot victims, there is the added fear of being taken away by police if they go to hospitals outside Cite Soleil.

Although the main hospital serving this neighborhood recently re-opened, treatment is limited to out-patient services. An emergency team is active at night only for assisting pregnant women with birth delivery.

Hands Together, an organization that has been providing schooling facilities and food to the poor in Cite Soleil for several years, has only just started providing basic health service to the area with the aid of mobile clinic. On February 17, they were dispensing treatment to residents in the market place at Bwa Nef but the scope of treatment offered is obviously limited. They also serve other areas like Boston and Soleil 24 as well as other poor neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince and therefore can only provide irregular services.

### **Economic Situation**

The economic and social situation in Cite Soleil has always been critical. Now with the added situation of continuing violence, the ability for residents to find food and other basic commodities has been severely restricted. Since September 30<sup>th</sup>, public transportation no longer enter inside the area. As a result, commercial activities have nearly stopped. Street vending, that ensures a daily meal for many, is practically non-existent as residents cannot move freely in and out their respective localities.

Moreover, as hunger and other violations continue to plague residents, resort to criminal activities can only be expected to continue.

### **Conclusion**

The human rights situation faced by residents in Cite Soleil is still very critical. Governmental authorities, human rights and other organizations as well as the national press continue to ignore the crisis. The military intervention by MINUSTAH in December 2004 has barely touched upon resolving the security situation and restoring order. Still under the control of armed gangs, Cite Soleil is still a no-entry area for many. Those residents who have not been able to leave are facing worsening economic and social conditions and a highly insecure environment.

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