

December 5, 2006

High Commissioner Louise Arbour
Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNOG-OHCHR
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Dear Ms. Arbour,

We note your recent, very upbeat statements about the prospects for Haiti's future. For example, you told the press: "The balance sheet of my visit is very positive."

We would like to suggest that there is ample evidence that your optimism is not justified, and that Canada, as well as the UN, should in fact be launching a full investigation into the role they have played in Haiti. We urge you to consider the following evidence.

The OAS requested assistance from the UN in February, 2004, as rebel troops attacked government facilities in Haiti's countryside. The UN did not respond. President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was flown to the Central African Republic on a U.S. plane. President Aristide insists that this was done against his will. Both CARICOM and the African Union, representing 1/3 of UN membership, called for an investigation into the circumstances of President Aristide's ouster, but to day no such investigation has ever been launched, and it was actively opposed by the Governments of Canada, the United States, and France. The UN Security Council did, however, move quickly on February 29 to authorize a Multi-National Force, once Haiti's constitutional government had been replaced.

For years prior to this coup d'état, a crippling aid embargo was imposed on the Aristide government by the US, Canada and the EU, but financial, political and military support denied to Aristide's elected government was immediately provided to the unelected interim government of Gérard Latortue - a resident of Boca Raton, Florida who was named Prime Minister. The diplomatic, financial, and military assistance never wavered even as Latortue's government amassed an appalling human rights record. [1]

In January 2005 a detailed human rights report by Thomas Griffin of the University of Miami School of Law summarized conditions in Haiti after Aristide's ouster as follows:

"...the police, backed by UN forces, routinely carry out indiscriminate and unprofessional killing operations. The undisciplined army is back, protecting the rich and attacking the poor. The justice system is twisted against poor young men, dissidents and anyone calling for the return of the constitutional government." [2]

A later report by the Harvard School of Law would reach similar conclusions:

"MINUSTAH has effectively provided cover for the police to wage a campaign of terror in Port-au-Prince's slums. Even more distressing than MINUSTAH's complicity in HNP abuses are credible allegations of human rights abuses perpetrated by MINUSTAH itself..." [3]

In August of this year a study by Athena Kolbe and Royce Hutson was published in the UK medical journal Lancet. In this study, the authors estimated that 8,000 murders and 35,000 rapes had been committed while the interim government was in power. Four thousand of those murders were found to be politically motivated and perpetrated by government forces or their allies.[4]

We would ask that you review the information that is enclosed and consider tempering your optimism with some much needed criticism of the role Canada, the U.S. and the UN have played in Haiti. As we mark December 10 as International Human Rights Day here in Canada, many of us will be thinking deeply about the human rights disaster in which our government played such a direct role.

Sincerely,

Joe Emersberger
Kevin Skerrett
Stuart Neatby
Marcella Adey

On behalf of the 12 local organizations affiliated to the Canada Haiti Action Network

[1] For details - especially on Canada's role - see "Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the poor majority," by Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton.

[2]"HAITI HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATION: NOVEMBER 11-21, 2004" Published by University of Miami. See also IJDH Human Rights Report http://www.ijdh.org/articles/article_ijdh-human-rights_update-july-26-04.html#intro and also Amnesty International "Last Chance for Haiti?" April 2004

[3] "Keeping the peace in Haiti?" published by Harvard Law School; See also Independent (UK): Andrew Buncombe: Peacekeepers accused after killings in Haiti : <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/americas/article302259.ece> Video footage of the massacre referred to in the Independent article is in the film, "Haiti: We Must Kill the Bandits" (2006, Kevin Pina, Director). See also Znet: Isabel MacDonald: MINUSTAH in Cite Soleil: <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=55&ItemID=9245>

[4] "Human Rights Abuse and Other Criminal Violations in Port-au-Prince Haiti: A Random Survey of Households," The Lancet, August 31, 2006