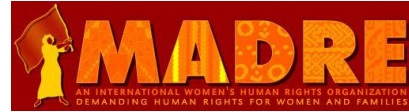




Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Haitian Women's Rights Activist Leaves Camp for Displaced People to Testify before the UN Human Rights Council

****Additional information will be presented at a press meeting on Tuesday, June 8 at 9:45 am, in the Library of Press Room 2, Palais des Nations (Main UN Building in Geneva, Avenue de la Paix)****

June 7, 2010—Geneva, Switzerland—Today, as the United Nations Human Rights Council gathers in Geneva, its representatives will hear testimony from Malya Villard-Appolon, a Haitian women's rights activist and [MADRE](#) partner who has lived in the camps for displaced people since the earthquake destroyed her home in January. Ms. Appolon, a leader of [KOFAVIV](#), a Haitian grassroots women's organization, has witnessed the skyrocketing incidence of rape in the camps and the lack of a coordinated or effective response to these persistent threats.

Also testifying will be lawyers from MADRE, the [Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti](#) (IJDH), and the law firm of Morrison & Foerster LLP, who recently returned from a delegation to Haiti and will be accompanying Ms. Appolon in Geneva.

Today, Malya Villard-Appolon of KOFAVIV said, "We want to tell the Human Rights Council that the systems for protecting women in the camps are broken. We get no protection from the police, or the peacekeepers. We feel we do not have access to the rooms where decisions about our safety are made. We need the support and commitment of the international community."

In her testimony, Ms. Appolon will call for increased security measures to prevent rape within the camps in repeated attacks against women sleeping in their tents, walking to the latrines, or otherwise left vulnerable. She will also demand that grassroots women's groups—often the only source of support for rape survivors and other women subsisting in the camps—be included in decision-making related to the United Nation's work in Haiti. Furthermore, she will insist that

funding from UN member states for the response efforts be conditioned on meeting these basic requirements to uphold women's rights.

Lisa Davis, a human rights attorney with MADRE, said, "During our time in Haiti, we observed a troubling failure by Haitian and UN officials and large non-governmental organizations to adequately address the rampant levels of rape in the camps. Malya's testimony will force this issue into the spotlight, and the UN member states will face the necessary reminder of their responsibility to protect the human rights of women living in the camps."

"It is totally unacceptable for these rapes to continue to go unpunished and undeterred," asserted Blaine Bookey, an attorney with IJDH, and coordinator of the delegation. "Women in the camps have suffered enough. The organizations running the camps and the United Nations have raised enough money to provide basic protections to vulnerable women."

Erica J. Richards, an attorney with the law firm Morrison & Foerster added that "Not only do our findings from Haiti show that women face a grave lack of security necessary to prevent and respond to the sexual violence crisis, but medical services are overwhelmed and unable to meet women's healthcare needs stemming from the assaults."

Yifat Susskind, MADRE Policy and Communications Director, said today, "Malya's testimony has few precedents. Rarely are the voices of displaced women heard by those in the halls of power. The Human Rights Council must seize the opportunity to benefit from her expertise."

For more information about MADRE's work in Haiti, visit our website at <http://www.madre.org/index/press-room-4/news/key/haiti.html>

About the Organizations

Coordinated by the [IJDH](#)-organized [Lawyers' Earthquake Response Network](#) (LERN), the delegation to Haiti, met with grassroots women's organizations, including KOFIV and FAVILEK, and larger NGOs including Kay Fanm and SOFA. IJDH fights for human rights and justice in Haiti and for fair and just treatment of Haitians in the United States.

[KOFIV](#), a [MADRE](#) sister organization established by and for rape survivors, has long served as a lifeline for countless women who face sexual violence in Haiti. Since the earthquake, they have organized emergency support services for people living in the camps, including medical aid for rape survivors, neighborhood watch patrols and human rights trainings.