

VANISHING CAMPS AT GUNPOINT

FAILING TO PROTECT
HAITI'S INTERNALLY DISPLACED

International Action  *Ties*

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Introduction: Action Cannot Wait

Since the earthquake, forced evictions and security problems have been disrupting the lives of Haiti's IDPs, raising numerous protection concerns. We appreciate that these concerns have been noted at the cluster level and within the Haitian government, resulting in policy proposals considered for implementation. But these policy changes are under consideration in drawn out political processes, which take time that threatened IDPs do not have.

The UN system and its partners, within the capacity and mandates in which they are currently operating, can take further immediate measures to prevent rights violations and promote the health and safety of camp residents.

With lives and livelihoods at stake, waiting for policies to fall into place is not an option.

International Action Ties' monitoring team has been visiting camps throughout Port-au-Prince since the earthquake. In this document, we provide case studies of camps facing imminent eviction and security-related threats to illustrate the immediate need for active protection measures. The camps described highlight common challenges encountered by the internally displaced of Port-au-Prince.

We present six key points that must be immediately addressed, including:

- **proactive intervention to stop evictions,**
- **on-demand provision of physical security,**
- **rapid land acquisition for camps,**
- **dignified relocation,**
- **continuing free services to meet basic needs,**
- **and a clarification and communication of the protection mechanism.**

Community guidance in the decision making process for all of these matters is necessary if we are to actually progress in the response to this disaster.

This report represents more than a thousand hours of field interviews, community meetings, and interaction with the internally displaced living in Port-au-Prince camps, and the opinions and experiences these individuals have related to us over the past six months.

Vanishing Camps

The case studies presented here are only a select set of camps; included with this document are logs of several other camps whose experiences further underscore the need for these points to be immediately and comprehensively addressed.

CAMP IMMACULEE, CITE SOLEIL

Camp Immaculee lies on a median in the middle of a road near an entrance to Cite Soleil. It's been described simply as "nonsecure" in nearly a month of IOM's weekly Camp Management Operations (CMO) reports.

The Cite Soleil CMO team initially misidentified the problem at the camp, saying attacks on police came from within it. The team tells us they have informed the local police and authorities of the situation and cannot take any further protection-oriented action.

The truth is that IDPs are enduring regular attacks by a small group described as "bandits" (later CMO reports appear to recognize this). Despite intermittent patrols by PNH and MINUSTAH, prompted by our calls to MINUSTAH officials, the camp remains fearful due to continuing attacks.

We received phone calls three nights in a row during the week of June 24 from multiple camp residents. Each time they said a group of around 10-15 men, throwing rocks and/or armed with machetes and guns, was threatening the camp demanding they leave the area. On two occasions we heard sounds of commotion and chaos in the background.

On the night of Saturday, July 2, the armed aggressors entered the camp and cut holes in tarp-based shelters with machetes. They stole 21-year-old committee member Dieuliphete Pierre's telephone, camera, and struck him in the head, leaving a mark visible to us the next day (see photo).

Discussion with PNH at the local station and Brazilian MINUSTAH military at their adjacent base led to pledges of increased patrols in the area, which they admitted were not likely to constitute effective protection from attackers who can easily hide in corridors and strike once patrols have passed. Not a single patrol passed the camp from 1am to 5am during a night we spent at the camp, a time period during which numerous attacks have taken place in days past.

The camp continually requested a fixed night-time security presence in lieu of relocation.

Having received nothing, they recently proposed that IOM support camp residents in forming their own security presence. However, such support was not provided to prevent the steady displacement of the camp's residents into streets and broken homes. Inaction on the security front during IOM's relocation negotiations with the Cite Soleil mayor essentially prolonged Camp Immaculee's subjection to continued fear and attacks. Many families spent nights sleeping in nearby dirty alleyways.

On the morning of July 12, we observed that the camp had vanished entirely.

PARC SPORTIF, CITE SOLEIL

15 minutes away by foot, a camp of at least 500 people on a soccer field called Parc Sportif has already disappeared.

For months after the earthquake the camp was underserved by NGOs. We saw malnourished children with no access to school during each of our five visits - twice in February, once in March, once in April, and again in early May. The flimsy camping tents they received from MSF in April began tearing after a few weeks under the wind, rain, and sun. But it was a welcome improvement over bedsheets and sticks.

By the end of May the camp was gone. A week-long “war” broke out, according to interviews with the space’s former occupants and neighbors. Groups from adjacent neighborhoods fought over the space, with machetes, guns, and other weapons. A 14-year-old boy from nearby was killed in the crossfire by a notorious gang member identified by the mother as Djaboni. Witnesses said another child was killed in the conflict.

As with Camp Immaculee, residents said they received no protection from PNH or MINUSTAH. The “war” subsided each time patrols passed through the area, then resumed.

When threats to burn the camp to the ground were made, everyone in the camp simply fled, emptying the area and dispersing into the surrounding neighborhoods.

CR5 AND CR8, DELMAS

After the earthquake, more than a thousand residents of the Delmas 60 area organized into fourteen small camps with the label “CR,” many on private plots of land.¹

The fifty-three families of CR8 were first threatened with violence and then experienced a forced eviction during the third week of June.

In early June, the landowner constructed a wall around the camp that restricted access to latrines for the IDPs. Community members reported that soon after, a “large man” entered the camp and verbally threatened residents with violent expulsion by armed “bandits” in fifteen days. They were also told that the only entrance to the camp would be locked on June 21.

Following these threats, the IDP families started moving into other CR camps, “into the street,” or back to unsafe houses. Jeannine Faustin of CR8, said, “We have people returning to houses that are completely cracked.”

Upon our June 28 visit, CR8 was empty and the main gate locked shut.

CR5 is a nearby camp of 44 families. It currently faces a similar threat, including the intrusion of ten armed men on May 27, who pointed guns at IDPs and demanded their willingness to leave the community.

No one has been relocated away from this dangerous situation.

¹ “CR” indicates “Centre Regroupment”

Threats, Evictions Without Responses

Vulnerable populations such as internally displaced women, children, and elderly only become more vulnerable when they are displaced for a second time.

The breakup of a community that has developed over the past six months itself engenders the weakening of social and community networks of protection. Many have already been forced to gather their things and trudge out of their camps to unfamiliar or dangerous places. Others have been killed or injured.

These cases listed above demonstrate inadequate protection responses to physical threats of violence. The blood of a 14-year-old boy, for example, is on the hands of the government and the international community, which has pledged to defend the human rights of Haitians and fill the gaps in the government's response.

Together, despite millions of dollars in funding and thousands of security-oriented personnel - police, military, and protection officers - the government, UN and partners are leaving earthquake victims at the mercy of landowners and gangs.

Vanishing camps are not solved problems. They are direct products of malfunctioning protection mechanisms. Many individuals and organizations have access to security resources but are systematically failing to allocate them toward protection of vulnerable populations. We expect them to respond to the recommendations below with action. We will seek to hold them accountable by alerting the donor public and international partners if they do not.

Urgent Prevention and Protection Measures

- **PROACTIVE INTERVENTION TO STOP EVICTIONS**
- **ON-DEMAND PROVISION OF PHYSICAL SECURITY TO PROTECT THE VULNERABLE AND THREATENED.**

According to IOM, at least 60% of camps are located on private land.² The above cases represent only a few of many documented camps evicted or facing eviction. Complacency by NGOs effectively supports landowner efforts to further displace and deprive IDPs.

Organizations should display a zero tolerance policy for any pressurizing tactics toward eviction and continue to aid earthquake victims with vigilance.

An immediate moratorium on evictions of IDPs can and must be enforced utilizing the labyrinth apparatus of established MINUSTAH, OCHA, GoH, community systems and partners. This action is not only urgently necessary to protect basic human rights essential to survival, but firmly grounded in international and Haitian law.³

Security must be consistently and swiftly provided to camps facing any type of violent threat.

Emergency hotlines designed to meet this need have proven useless in their present-form. Most communities interviewed were unaware of the hotlines. Once tried, all found them to be inconsistent and unresponsive.

² USAID Earthquake Fact Sheet #58, Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, page 2 <http://bit.ly/cacnME>

³ The right of IDPs to remain (grounded in freedom of movement established by the CCPR, ratified by the Haitian government) as well as the rights of IDP children to a standard of living suitable for normal development, and to free education are also legally binding on the Haitian government by ratification of the CRC. (Conversely, the right to private property simply protects against “arbitrary deprivation” of property, and is not legally binding in international human rights law.)

The hotline system must be designed for rapid and appropriate response to the specific needs of IDP camps. Toll-free hotline numbers and procedures must be widely disseminated. Dispatchers must speak Haitian Creole and have a positive attitude of trust, not condescension and skepticism, toward classes of the poor that have historically suffered from prejudices against them by other sectors of Haitian society. Outcomes of this system should include regular visits to camps to discuss community-specific security needs and quick stationing of patrols at vulnerable camps.

MINUSTAH and police personnel currently in the country represent sufficient capacity to achieve these objectives in the present moment.

If they can be assigned by the dozens to enforce barricades every time there is a political demonstration, they can surely be deployed to protect IDPs as well. Claims that there are not enough personnel are not believable.

Sustainable Solution-Building

- **USE ALL AVAILABLE MEANS TO ACQUIRE LAND FOR RELOCATION, INCLUDING FUNDING HAITIAN CIVIL SOCIETY TO PURCHASE AVAILABLE LAND**
- **SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY'S DECISION-MAKING IN RELOCATION-RELATED MATTERS**
- **PROVIDE A MINIMUM LEVEL OF FREE SERVICES ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS OF THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED**
- **CLEAR EXPLANATION AND COMMUNICATION TO POPULATION AT LARGE OF HAITI PROTECTION MECHANISMS**

Immediate termination of rights violations, as described above, remains the top priority. Meanwhile, relocation planning should respect IDPs' rights to information, choice, and participation.

A verifiably representative camp committee should be considered the primary stakeholder in the negotiating process, as it represents the more vulnerable and sizeable group, and that most affected by the earthquake.

Organizations should be prepared to support a camp's decision regarding relocation. If a community wishes to stay on private property rather than be transplanted elsewhere, efforts to persuade the landowner to let them stay must be undertaken, including the deployment of funds (e.g. compensation, free repairs). If a community wishes to relocate, they should have choice of the new location which will not degrade their standard of living.

All of these measures fall within the current capacity and mandates of international organizations.

Waiting to move ahead with relocation until the government's Presidential commission on land issues completes its mission is unacceptable. While foreign NGOs have limited access to land, there are Haitian private citizens and civil groups who can provide a solution.

In Leogane, for example, in the face of frustrating inaction by local officials, Haitian Roody Joseph has negotiated one-on-one with owners of empty plots of land. His partnership with Samaritan's Purse is leading to the swift acquisition of these plots and construction of T-shelters to relocate the most vulnerable families off private land where they are being harassed.⁴ This is a model that can be emulated all over Port-au-Prince. Similarly, organizational efforts to lease usable land or acquire land in existing camps can be stepped up.

⁴ If you have questions, contact Roody Joseph of Promised Provision Ministries. roodyjj@yahoo.com or +509 3854 7176

Camp Corail was supposed to be a model camp for relocated IDPs. But food distribution stoppages at the request of the Haitian government led to hunger in the camp and repeated demonstrations demanding a just response from the aid mechanism.

Termination of free water, sanitation and food distribution to vulnerable communities is an attack on their human rights and contrary to the humanitarian imperative on which our organizations are founded.

The achievement of Sphere humanitarian standards must be a top priority; officials who suggest the contrary must be ignored. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which ensure water, food, shelter, education, and healthcare, should be used to guide this service provision.⁵ It is within the current capacity of international organizations to continue providing humanitarian services for free.

Finally, the protection capacity of IDPs, aid workers, and partners will be strengthened if the protection mechanism is made explicit and accessible.

Communication could take the form of a flowchart (or similar medium) of protection options outlining the mechanism and lines of authority, as they currently exist. This could also facilitate ongoing assessment of the protection mechanism, pointing to means for future improvement.

We look forward to dialogue and collaboration in the design and implementation of swift solutions to the problems outlined in this report. We intend to issue a report highlighting improvements in protection mechanisms when we begin to see security needs being met in the field.

⁵ While the Guiding Principles are not themselves a legally binding document, its provisions are rooted in legally binding conventions that have been ratified by the Haitian government, including the CCPR, the CRC, and CEDAW. Representative of the UN SG on the human rights of IDPs Walter Kalin's "Annotations" to the Guiding Principles (Brookings Institution, 2008) further clarify the legal basis of each Guiding Principle.

International Action Ties (IAT) is a grassroots community development organization aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty by working towards structural change and community mobilization. IAT works together with marginalized and underserved communities to design and implement minimal exterior-input community based infrastructure development programs. Through the provision of field mobilizers, who work directly alongside community members, IAT's efforts address the interdependent areas of Education, Environment, Public Health, Social Equities, and Livelihoods. IAT has been working in rural Haiti since 2007, primarily in the Nippes Region, Petite Riviere de Nippes. Like other members of the Haiti Response Coalition, IAT was one of the first organizations to reach Port-au-Prince and begin relief work.

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