

CENTRAL PLATEAU: Mirebalais-Lascaobas-Belladère

Former soldiers and armed civilians enjoy complete impunity

The Current situation of the Victims of Former Soldiers and Armed Civilians from 2002-2005



Attendees in Plateau Central Conference with AUMOHD

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2001 following the second popular election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President, two groups participated in an armed revolt against the government in place at that time: that of the Resistance Front of Gonaïves, led by Metayer (Butteur), Métayer Jean-Pierre Baptiste (called Jean Tatoune) and Winter (Winter) Etienne, who launched the insurrection leading to the seizure of Gonaïves, February 5, 2004; the second called National Liberation Front which was directed by Guy Philippe and Louis-Jodel Chamblain, former head of FRAPH, acquitted by the interim government of Boniface/Latortue by the decision of the Court of Appeals on May 5, 2005. This group consisted principally of former members of the Haitian Army, FADH, which slipped into Haiti from neighboring Dominican Republic. In 2002 many cases of violations were reported in the commune of Belladère, Las Cohobas and mainly in the zone named Pernald. Thus some women and children were victims.

However since the arrival to power of the current government democratically elected by popular vote, a new hope has been reborn in the hearts of these citizens, victims of abuse and violations of human rights, who unceasingly are requesting AUMOHD's support so that the authors and accomplices of these acts of violation can be brought to justice to answer for their acts of assassination, rape, burnings, and other crimes perpetrated in plain view of everyone against the people of the towns listed above.

This report which is meant to be first of all objective must expose in a detailed fashion the concerns of AUMOHD (Association of University Grads For a Haiti With Law) with respect to the unacceptable situation of impunity which holds sway following the grave violation of human rights in the entire Department of the Center, notably the Central Plateau (Mirebalais-Lascahobas-Belladère) where people were assassinated, raped and or disappeared because of their political convictions. Others were robbed of their goods, or chased from their post with no justice proceedings at all.

This report intends to analyze the different cases of human rights violations, which took place in the Plateau Central during the period of 2003-2005. This analysis uses the method of direct interviews with the victims, a relative, or a neighbor, or an eyewitness of a certain event, and also by category of victims. It intends to draw out in part or in whole the attention of the Haitian State by way of the current government to these flagrant violations of human rights that to this day remain unpunished. At the same time this report is intended to sensitize national and international organizations about these cases of the violation of fundamental rights of the people of Mirebalais, Lascahobas and Belladère with a view to demanding from the Haitian State some adequate solutions that will be able to remedy this situation.

This report finally intends to present recommendations to the Haitian authorities concerning the urgent measures they ought to take so that the perpetrators, co-defendants, leaders and accomplices answer for their acts and that the victims indemnified and compensated in conformity to the law.

2. – CONTEXT OF THE REPORT

Beginning Tuesday, May 8, 2007, AUMOHD received in its offices a letter from Mr. Cléonor Souverain in which he made us aware of the people who had been victimized by the former military, and armed civilians, notably five (5) members of his family and another, Bertrand Hussein seriously wounded and consequently handicapped. In this correspondence he also asked for AUMOHD's intervention as an organization of rights and the dignity of the human person to meet the victims and families of victims to listen to their testimony in order to understand the breadth of impunity which ruled in this Department (Center), and consequently to bring these cases of flagrant violation of rights and the dignity of the human person before the courts so that the perpetrators, co-defendants and accomplices of this crimes against common rights might be brought to justice to be judged according to the law.

3. - Geo-historic view of the Central Plateau: Mirebalais-Lascahobas and Belladère.

3.1 Mirebalais is a section of the Department of the Center of the country that includes 3 communes (Mirebalais, Saut d'Eau and Boucan Carre). It has about 60,000 inhabitants spread over a territory of 354 square kilometers. Historically Mirebalais and Lascahobas in 1795 were witness to the bloodiest battles of Toussaint Louverture against the English who used these areas as strategic points of food supplies. Mirebalais has a District Court and a Police Station that are working under difficult circumstances according to the testimony of an employee who wishes to remain anonymous.

3.2 Lascahobas -

Lascahobas is situated between Mirebalais and Belladère. It is like Mirebalais a section that is comprised of three communes (Lascahobas, Belladère and Savanette). Lascahobas has a population of about 36,000 inhabitants and covers 233 square kilometers. The commune of Lascahoas has one Peace Court with two judges and two court clerks for the population of this size, and a police station with ten poor, badly equipped policemen.

3.3 Belladère -

Belladère is one of the border towns of the country. It has a population of 48,000 inhabitants with land of 322 square kilometers. Belladère has a Peace Court with two judges and a police station with not even minimal means for a border town that has no other military force for controlling or defending the territory.

4. Meeting August 11, 2007

Following different meetings for exchanging views and testimonies with the families of victims, a delegation from AUMOHD accompanied by a Canadian delegation of journalists and human rights advocates made a visit on site at Mirebalais, Lascahobas and Belladère on Saturday, August 11 with the principal purpose of collecting new information about the crimes and of confirming the news already collected. More than 100 victims coming from different zones participated in this meeting.

4.1 Meeting at Belladère

At the nightclub, L'Oiseau Mystérieux (Mysterious Bird), more than 100 from Baptiste, Renthe Mathe, Roi Sec, Pénal and Riaribes and other localities of Belladère were present to give testimony, to explain vividly and painfully how a father, a mother, an uncle, an aunt, a cousin, a husband, a wife, a friend or a neighbor had

been assassinated, raped or disappeared by unknown men heavily armed, the majority of whom, according to their testimony, were soldiers demobilized having as their leader at first Remissanthe Ravix, Clautaire Jean Baptiste, Volatire Jean Baptiste alias Potille, and then later Guy Philippe and Louis Jodel Chamblain. Three workshops (i-with victims of Baptiste-Renthe Mathe and Roi Sec, ii- victims of the town of Belladère, Pernal and Riaribes, and iii. victims of disappearances who, after reporting to the delegation, formed to seek justice and reparation without recourse to violence or private vengeance. The objectivity and the truth are two fundamental elements indispensable for arriving at shedding just and clear light on these evil events that took place in the Central Plateau.

4.1.1. Sessions with victims from Baptiste, Renthe Mathe and Roi Sec

Summary of statements of the workshop

* My name is Joël Paulas. I come from the 2nd Section of Roi Sec. I am very happy to see today, for the first time, a human rights organization is with us at Belladere after all these sad events. We at Belladere are the most scorned people, the most vulnerable in the Haitian State. What seems graver to us is that after all these massacres, rapes, assassinations there is contempt on the part of the State for us. Moreover there is no freedom of speech for us at this time, no security, no disarmament. The assailants, Guy Philippe are still present in the town; they are there, without being concerned about the courts or the police. Out of every 5 people you look at in the streets, two out of 3 are carrying a weapon. As for access to justice in Belladere there is almost none. The demand from my workshop is addressed directly to President René Garcia Préval, the Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis in whom we have a lot of confidence in making reparation for these crimes so that all the perpetrators and accomplices of these massacres will answer in court for their acts.

* My name is St. Hilaire Vernet. I come from Renthe Mathe. I am a leader of Fanmi Lavalas in Belladere. I thank the AUMOHD delegation that has come to help us at this very difficult time. Mr. President of AUMOHD, gentlemen journalists and the Canadian delegation of human rights, I do not want to beat around the bush in telling you that the assassins of these crimes are all here. They are in the Parliament as elected representatives or, security guards for representatives. They are in the city hall of Belladere. They were candidates for the Presidency. Except for Ravix (Remissanthe) and Clotaire (Jean-Baptiste) who are dead. We are asking President René Garvia Préval, Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, Minister of Justice, and Mr. René Magloire to take measures to correct this situation of impunity that prevails here in Plateau Central.

* I am Philiassaint Robert. I thank you in the name of the whole workshop and most of all in the name of those who were assassinated, the women who were raped, those who were disappeared. In our group we worked on the question of access to justice. We have concluded that justice was reduced to a minimum in 2002 until 2005 with the defacto government of Boniface/Latortue. The assassination of the Justice of the Peace at Lascahobas, Lozamard Christophe in the middle of doing his job is proof that the men with Guy Philippe had no limit to their fury against the people. Justice was and is to this day in extreme difficulty to act. Our workshop entreated the Minister of Justice, Atty. René Magloire to make a profound change within the judiciary of Mirebalais.

4.1.2 Sessions of the victims of the center of town, of Pernal and of Riaribes

1. Summary of workshop #2

* I am Pierre Luca, workshop #2. The remarks of #2 workshop are that the rest of the country seems not to be aware of what has taken place here in Central Plateau, namely, the extortion, the crimes, rape, and assassinations by the former military men and armed civilians of innocent persons. The workshop is very

concerned about lodging a complaint against all those who participated in these crimes like Guy Philippe, Louis Jodel Chamblain and all the accomplices like the leaders of the former opposition party that financed and encouraged these crimes. In general in the Plateau there are many children without fathers, without mothers, lots of women without a husband, and what is worse is that there is no presence of the State to take care of these vulnerable children exposed to delinquency, stealing and prostitution. We ask that the Haitian State take responsibility for punishing these criminals like Guy Philippe, Chamblain and their accomplices for their crimes.

* I am Pierre Cavil, the eyewitness of the assassination of Deputy Mayor of Savanette, Amongue Lema. I am ready and willing to explain to the police and the judge how they assassinated the Mayor provided the conditions of security are guaranteed. What we want is justice and reparation for the victims.

* I greet the members of the AUMOHD delegation. My name is Leonard Yonel. I come from Pernal, the place of the holocausts. It is horrible, this well known place of the terrorism of former soldiers. Pedel Colo, Amongue Lema, Pierre Marais, a businessman, Samedi Patrick, a SWAT policeman, Bernadeau Marjorie Jean Fritzner, and many other persons were caught, captured and killed in this place. We want an independent investigation of all these cases of the violation of human rights.

4.1.3 Sessions of the families of victims who were disappeared.

This workshop discussed the disappeared or dead and executed leaving no trace. Look at the woman in the photo above at right; imagine the pain the anxiety and the waiting of this poor woman, Mrs. Jean Mesillia. Her husband, Bouton Exile was disappeared on March 14, 2003. He was taken from his home at Roi Los Puerc. Bouton Exile was 70 years old.

Partial list of the disappeared (2002-2004)

1. Guitoya Fede was taken from her home, March 14, 2003 by the armed civilians at Roi Los Puerc. She was 60 years old. From the time of this abduction there has been no news from her. According to Boure Anela, her sister-in-law, the former soldiers assassinated her because of her political affiliation since she was very involved in the Lavalas movement. All attempts to find her in the prisons and morgues have been in vain. Guitoya Fede was the mother of five (5) children, (Gary Jean, Télémaque Jean, Joseph Jean, Elimene Jean and Islame Jean).
2. Nejan Espérance was taken from his home on March 14, 2003 in the presence of his wife (Elimene Jean).
3. Former soldiers took Bouton Exile from his home on March 14, 2003 in the presence of his wife, Jean Mesilia. Bouton was 70 years old.
4. Eritil Exilas was taken from his home on March 14, 2003 by former soldiers aged about 70 years in the presence of his wife, Jean Zelira, his daughter, Exilas Marelia and her son Emile Dinois.
5. Deli Oscar, aged 59, was taken from his home in the month of January 2004. He was riddled with bullets according to witnesses and his body was abandoned in the woods.
6. Jean Bouchette, age 58, was taken to the Prosecutors office of Belladere on April 30, 2002.
7. Pierre Cius Marcellin was taken away then shot by the former soldiers in April 2003. Reference: Saint Pierre Marcellin, his father.
8. Alcant Bernier was disappeared, no one knows if he is dead or not. Reference: Saint Hiliare Vernet, his cousin and Dieuseul Bernier his son.

9. Vieregeme Joseph, age 47, disappeared since June 2003. Reference: Saint Hilaire Vernet, his father and Jilissaint Robert.

10 Brunette Jean was take at Croix-Des-Bouquets when she was on her way to the Central Plateau. Reference: Cameau Telson, her husband.

4. 2. Meeting at Lascahobas

At Lascahobas we met a dozen relatives of victims in a secret place because according to them the issue of security is to this day very precarious in Lascahobas.

Here is the presentation of the participants' testimony:

1. I am Denaud, brother of Denaud Wilfrid, father of 11 children now left to my sole responsibility. Wilfrid was assassinated by several bullets in Lagoude near Pernal. His body was abandoned for several days because the situation was such that for us, the relatives, it was not easy to recover the bodies. We know very well who the assassins of Wilfrid are. They are currently present in Lascahobas, Belladere. Many of them are in Port-Au-Prince. We are ready to collaborate with the courts and the police to talk about this assassination.

2. I am Jerbo Luc. I am an eyewitness of the assassination of Pedel Colo, June 21, 2003, a schoolboy from Rheto who was coming from Port-Au-Prince to see his parents. He was assassinated because he could not identify homes of Lavalas members for the former soldiers. Voltaire Jean Baptiste and Fernand executed him. Ravix Remissaint was present during the assassination but he did not shoot Colo.

3. I am the wife of Sincere Joseph who was assassinated on the night of December 10 and 11, 2002 by a group of more than 15 heavily armed men. We (myself, my daughter and my husband) were fully asleep when someone knocked on the door with great noise and called out, Sincere! Sincere! I asked who was it please. The person saying he was Cabue answered. It's me Cabue! (Please note that Cabue Johnson is a very well known person in the community. See #4. In an instant the conversation became an order, demanding that I open the door immediately or else the house and its contents would be blown up by gunfire. So I myself opened the door and Sincere went to them. It was a way of saving my own life and that of my daughter. In an instant I heard a gunshot, boom! And then nothing more! My daughter and I left the house silently through the woods to take refuge with relatives in another place. The next day Sincere was found assassinated with a bullet in the head. Since then there has been no progress, no procedure to get the assassins of this crime to answer for this heinous act. It would be a joy for me if really AUMOHD could come and help us bring to justice these assassins like Guy Philippe and their companions.

4. I am Cabue Johnson. I was arrested by the group of Clotaire Jean Baptiste on December 10 and 11, 2002 after they had assassinated the so-called Jean Aris Signe alias Janjan. I spent a good while in prison, accused of being the leader because I am a Lavalas director in the zone. I have to tell the truth. I was not tortured as was the case for many people who were arrested in similar circumstances.

5. I am Mrs. Louidor Dorsainvil born Fils-Aimé Degrace. On the night of December 10-11, it was the saddest night for my family. A group of armed men came into my house. One of them knocked on the door and called out, Dorsainvil! Dorsainvil! I asked, who are you? The person answered, "it's me, Cabue (a companion militant of Dorsainvil). I asked him what he wanted at that hour. The person who said he was Cabue answered me; "We have come to get you for an urgent meeting. I refused to open the door for quite a while. Then he ordered me to open the door. I opened the door and Dorsainvil went out. After a few minutes I heard a gun blast (Booooo!) and the next morning his body was found in a canal not far from the house.

Dorsainvil was killed because he was Lavalas. He left 7 children under my responsibility, without employment, without any help.

6. I am the brother of Pierre Maret who was assassinated by the soldiers of Guy Philippe, of Clotaire Jean Baptiste and companions. On June 21, 2003, he was arrested after having been identified as a Lavalas member. He was assassinated the same day. Pierre Maret was the father of six children who are currently abandoned without any help.

5. Most salient cases

5.1 The affair of the family of Cleonor Souverain

On the night of June 23-24, 2003 a group of men, heavily armed coming from the Dominican Republic according to the victims composed of Ravix Remissanthe, Clotaire Jean Baptiste (both assassinated in suspicious circumstances by the interim government at that time), Bell Panel, Edouard Cazimir and Voltaire Jean Baptiste (both now free and at ease in Belladere). This group brutally assassinated the following people:

Rosita Souverain, a young girl age 24

Nathalie Souverain, a young school girl age 17

Mimose Brizard a merchant of weights, age 38 years on her way from Port-Au-Prince to the Dominican Republic at the family of Souverain

Dubuisson Brizard, a merchant of weights age 35 like Mimose Brizard was also in transit at the Souverain family.

Ramil Albert Louis, a young schoolboy, 15 years old.

Bertrand Hussain was also shot in the back by a bullet, more precisely in the vertebral column and consequently is handicapped for life (See photo #4)

5.2 The affair of Peligre

On May 7, 2003, a group of men composed of 12 people according to witnesses attacked the hydroelectric dam. They killed two security guards and set fire to the control room. This crime against state property constituted then a crime against the state.

5.3 The case of the Justice of the Peace at Lascahobas

Lozamard Christophe: On November 28 the Justice of the Peace of Lascahobas was assassinated after having been ambushed by a group of armed men while he was carrying out his functions as a judge, that is to say, he was on the way to make a report. A judge assassinated in the exercise of his functions and until now, the Haitian State has done absolutely nothing to compensate the family of this judge adequately

5.4 The Assassination of 4 employees of the Ministry of the Interior

On July 25, 2003 in the Section of Rio Sec, near Penal four employees (Jean Marie Depeigne, Adrien Celestin, Wilfrid Thomas and Chrétien Augustin of the Ministry of the Interior and of the Territorial Collective were assassinated as they were returning from installing a Communal Council at Belladere. The bodies of the four assassinated were badly treated, then burned by the assailants.

6. The principle accused perpetrators, co-defendants, and accomplices of these acts:

The accused authors and co-authors and accomplices of these criminal acts of violation of human rights, of crimes against humanity and human dignity are all known and recognizable by their victims and the people. The people met as relatives of the victims stated that the authors, co-authors, directors and supporters of these atrocities are first of all the army of the former opposition to the Aristide government. They are many, some

Jodel Chamblain



more active than others. It was very difficult for AUMOHD to note down all the names of the accused authors cited by the victims. Let us mention only those the most frequently mentioned by the victims and/or by the relatives of victims among the former military: Guy Philippe, Louis Jodel Chamblain, Ravix Remissinthe, Clotaire Jean Baptiste, Joseph Jean Baptiste, Cazimir Edouard, Celestin Moise, Victor Gaston, Jean Edner, Fernand Edouard, Walso Vincent, Bardin Amonvil and many others.

AUMOHD has received detailed and well documented information from witnesses that conducted an interview with former 2006 presidential candidate Judy C Roy who acknowledged traveling to the Central Plateau and other locations during the 2001-2003 time period to provide direct financial assistance to perpetrators of the above violence. Winter Etienne has corroborated the involvement of Roy. There is also solid evidence concluding that a handful of anti-government businessmen and political parties some connected with current Haitian senators, at the time provided a significant amount of financial and infrastructure support to the gunmen.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations of AUMOHD.

Haiti has been experiencing for many years a chronic impunity. This impunity has engendered as a consequence among the victims of a distrust of the judicial system and a revengeful spirit to have recourse to private justice. With this report, AUMOHD wishes above all to attract the attention of the national and international community of human rights, social organizations, which fight for the respect of rights and the dignity of the human person around a group of crimes that have been perpetrated on the population of Plateau Central from 2002 to 2005. People have been assassinated, disappeared; others have been obliged to abandon their families, burned homes. Women, children have been left to themselves. These crimes and damages have never been called into question from that time on so that the authors, co-authors and accomplices of these acts would answer legally for their acts and so that the victims would be compensated according to the law.

AUMOHD reminds the Haitian State in all its three branches of power (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial) of its high, constitutional obligations with regard to the people in the whole territory in terms of protection and human rights.

AUMOHD demands of the government, the police and public safety, to take measures for adequate security for the entire national territory notably in the Central Plateau that will be able to prevent these atrocities in the future.

AUMOHD encourages the political parties, groups and subgroups of political parties, including political leaders to work for the effective creation of space for diverse ideas that are implied in ideological pluralism, in sum, for tolerance with a view to guaranteeing rights that are inalienable and unassailable for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in peace and brotherhood.

AUMOHD begs the Préval/Alexis government to take urgent measures to assure that the witnesses be protected, the relatives and close friends of victims and also attempts be made at preventing all sorts of possible attacks.

AUMOHD demands finally the government prosecutors of Port-Au-Prince and/or of Mirabelais to hurry quickly to take public action against these authors, co-authors and accomplices of these crimes and violations of human rights without taking account of their social rank, their political associations or their economic status.

Long live Haiti, Long live justice and no to impunity.