



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Bureau des Avocats Internationaux

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Press Release

Port-au-Prince, October 11, 2010 - The [Bureau des Avocats Internationaux](#) (BAI), a law firm devoted to the defense of human rights in Haiti, wishes to express its dismay at the indifference and passivity of the Haitian authorities despite the worsening situation of displaced persons or those without shelter nine months after the earthquake of January 12, 2010.

The approximately 1.5 million inhabitants internally displaced since the earthquake – more than one fifth of the population – continue to be exposed to hazardous conditions, uncertainty, threats of eviction, extortion, various crimes including sexual violence, and epidemics, preventing them from operating within the confines of normal social life.

The BAI reminds the Government of Preval and Bellerive that the **right to housing** is a fundamental right of men and women explicitly recognized by the 1987 Constitution in Article 22, which states: “The State recognizes the right of every citizen to **decent housing**, education, food and social security.”

The BAI also wishes to remind both the current authorities and members of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) that even the dictatorship of Jean-Claude Duvalier adopted a social housing decree (Decree of December 6, 1982) transforming the National Housing Enterprise into the Public Promotion of Social Housing (EPPLS). (EPPLS’ office is located in Delmas 3, rue du Foyer # 34, whose current Director General Engineer Architect is Elong Othelot.)

A preamble to the 1982 social housing decree calls on the EPPLS, on behalf of the State, “to promote the quality of life of disadvantaged social categories” recognizing the importance of identifying “the housing needs of the populations concerned” and “to prepare, plan, implement and manage social housing projects for the benefit of families and individuals with lower incomes.”

The current housing crisis is the surest indicator of social disintegration and moral decay in Haiti. The Preval/Bellerive Government has not only shown no willingness to respond to the problem of the internally displaced, but it barely conceals its contempt for the condition of a people without recourse.

The BAI reiterates the request it made to Mr. Michel FORST, the UN Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights: The Preval/Bellerive Government must negotiate a moratorium with the purported owners of the vacant land currently accommodating the camps pending the adoption and implementation of a final solution to the benefit of the Internally Displaced Persons.

It would be regrettable that a right as fundamental as the right to housing is trivialized and associated rights, such as the rights to education, health, recreation, and voting, among others, are trampled on by the Preval/Bellerive government. And it would be pathetic for the international community to be an accomplice to a government so inactive that it is likely to induce lethargy in the minds of the most vigilant.

Writing for BAI: Mario JOSEPH, Lawyer