

# Selling Subordination as Stabilization



***"Because it is their country."***

*-Haitian National Police officer's answer after he was asked why a United Nation's vehicle pushed through a peaceful demonstration, knocking over five people and causing injuries.*

***International Action***  ***Ties***

**November 8, 2010**

# Introduction

October 20<sup>th</sup> saw a cholera epidemic emerge that was brought to the people of Haiti. The deteriorating conditions, caused by centuries of exploitation of the land and her people at the hands of foreign intervention and aggressive neo-colonial policies, were accelerated after the January 12<sup>th</sup> earthquake. For nearly ten months, the international community with the United Nations at the helm, has sidelined Haitian civil society groups, organizations, and government from participation in the disaster response. This exclusion helped cultivate ideal epidemic conditions that have their roots in a long history of economic and political intervention by foreign powers in Haiti.

The failures of the response were documented and analyzed recently by the advocacy group Refugees International (RI). Quite rapidly, the United Nations felt the need to respond to the report, suggesting that a nerve of truth was struck. Spokesperson Nesirky responded by stating that "[Refugees International] is obviously highlighting some very important matters" and that "[UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon] obviously shares those concerns."<sup>1</sup> For all the obviousness emanating from Mr. Nesirky's statement, the shared concern of the UN has not been very obvious to those still struggling within Haiti's internal displacement camps.

"For nine months, [the international NGOs and MINUSTAH] just drive past on the road. They don't come in; they don't see us. If they do see us, they don't care." This was the statement of a displaced woman during a camp community meeting in Camp Toussaint L'ouverture, named for the leader of Haiti's revolution. She lost her home in the earthquake and has since lived in a IDP camp with conditions characterized accurately by RI as having "appalling standards of living" leading "the majority of Haitians to believe that nothing is happening" with the recovery operations.<sup>2</sup>



*One of the many displacement camps that exists without official recognition, lacking basic services and resources. Troutier, November 4, 2010. These conditions are prior to the rains of Hurricane Thomas.*

In the UN's short response, assurances were made that those who "advise [UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon] have looked closely at [the report]" and that "the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the mission on the ground are looking closely." Upon informing IDPs in the camps of the attention the RI report has drawn, many responded with the query, "why did the response on the ground need a report to see what is happening to us?" One can hope that OCHA will not only start "looking closely," as the United Nations claims they are already doing, but will actually start to listen to

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Secretary General. "Comments from spokesperson for the Secretary General regarding Refugee International's report on Haiti." October 7, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Refugees International. Haiti: Still Trapped in the Emergency Phase. Refugees International. October 6, 2010. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/haiti-still-trapped-emergency-phase>



the Haitians who are living in the camps.

## Past Analysis; Deaf Ears

As calls of the displaced continually landed on the deaf ears of the UN leadership, many in the international community relayed this message in an attempt to convince those in positions of authority that these calls needed to be heard if positive progress is to be made. Refugees International specifically pointed out the exclusion and lack of communication with the displaced and with Haitian civil society.<sup>3</sup>

In response to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's stated plans for developing Haiti, Beverly Bell of Other Worlds, who has thirty years of experience working with Haiti's community groups, noted, "Haitians do not share the enthusiasm," referencing statements "signed by twenty-four citizens organizations, refer[ring] to a near total exclusion of Haitian actors."<sup>4</sup> This report was available in April and included specific recommendations on how the aid and recovery could follow the lead of the survivors and organizations that represent grassroot sectors of Haitian society. The Institute of Justice and Democracy in Haiti in March pointed to exclusion as a consistent problem and called for full participation of people in the camps in the decision making and coordination of the response.<sup>5, 6</sup> Members of International Action Ties (IAT) first reported encountering resistance to inclusion of Haitians and, most specifically, IPDs in the OCHA cluster system as early as February.

But if the United Nations and MINUSTAH were serious about changing the fundamental communication dysfunctions preventing a just humanitarian response, they could have addressed the issues raised by a Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights/Centro de Justicia Global report suggested they do so in March 2005.<sup>7</sup> Over five years of UN "peacekeeping" have passed after their recommendations



*Etant Dupain of Bri Kouri Nouvel Gaye, a Haitian alternative media and mobilization group, distributes cholera awareness information the day after the epidemic was suspected. Over 300,000 flyers and 80 hours of public announcements were delivered by this group, directly to the communities.*



*View from the announcement truck during the cholera awareness campaign of Bri Kouri Nouvi Gaye that targeted camps, schools, markets, churches, busy interstions, and other gathering areas. People were encouraged to approach the truck for more information and discussion, a very different approach than the militarized aid distribution seen in Haiti over the past ten months.*

<sup>3</sup> Refugees International. Haiti: Still Trapped in the Emergency Phase. Refugees International. October 6, 2010. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/haiti-still-trapped-emergency-phase>

<sup>4</sup> Bell, Beverly. From Disaster Aid to Solidarity. Other Worlds, April 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. Annual Report, 2005-2006.

<sup>6</sup> Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. Neglect in the Encampments: Haiti's Second Wave Humanitarian Disaster. March 23, 2010. <http://ijdh.org/archives/10671>

<sup>7</sup> Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights & Centro de Justicia Global. Keeping the Peace in Haiti? March 2005.

to "bridge the linguistic divide between U.N. personnel and the Haitian people by training personnel in Creole or at the very least, French. If that is not possible, by hiring additional professional translators to accompany personnel in the field."<sup>8</sup> Half a decade was available to develop systems of basic communications; a necessary step towards inclusion of the Haitian population that UN officials have yet to take, leading RI to point this out again as a major flaw in the disaster response. UN spokesperson Nesirky chose to not address the persistent gaps in communication in his response to Refugees International, leading many to conclude that there is no intention of acknowledging the issue, let alone taking positive steps towards including the IDPs in the UN/OCHA system. As long as subordination of Haitian perspectives is at the center of the stabilization mission and disaster response, this system will inevitably fail the vast majority of the Haitian population.

## Building on a History of Exclusion

The brief moments that feature inclusion of Haitian opinion in UN logistics base discussions tend to be lip service and boxes being checked. Thus far, perfunctory Haitian involvement has remained far from actual participation. Acceptance of these circumstances among UN officials is commonplace. During a July 14 cluster meeting inside the UN Logistics Base, the center of the humanitarian coordination activities, the cluster lead, referencing two non-Haitian members of IAT, stated, "we actually have an organization here representing the beneficiary communities." IAT is a US-based organization. Certainly, this is not the inclusion that the Haitian displaced have requested, and is not adequate for vulnerable populations' representation in the decision-making process. Later in the meeting, the underlying intentions of inclusion were illuminated as the cluster lead encouraged agencies to "use" local partners as much as possible in their projects "if you need plumbing and hammering," because "people are ready to chip in to help their own neighborhoods."

Given that the level of Haitian participation rarely exceeds this hammering (and certainly never gets to "plumbing" in the IDP camps), while preventing access to planning and resources, we should expect what RI refers to as a paralysed disaster response. While the head of MINUSTAH, Edmund Mulet, felt that the OCHA response "lost the sense of urgency" months ago, Partners In Health (PIH) noted a marked increase in the numbers of children suffering from malnutrition in Port-au-Prince after the stoppage of general food distributions in April.<sup>9</sup> Also, nearly all the IDPs remain in failing tarped shelter (only eighteen thousand transitional shelters have been built as of October 31). MINUSTAH's record of "virtually ignoring allegations, relegating them to obscurity and thus guaranteeing that abuses and neglect go uncorrected" is now being replicated by UN OCHA.<sup>10</sup>

The United Nations response to RI's report touted improved lighting in the camps, presumably referring to the UNFPA solar lights now being installed. This certainly is a welcome development and one that has been consistently requested by many of the displaced since very early in the response. As of October 15, 2010, these lights in just over 20 of the nearly 1300 officially recognized camps are now being installed months after Malya Villard-Apollon of KOFIVIV, a Haitian community organization of rape survivors working against gender based violence (GBV), requested "immediate provision of security and lighting in the camps" during

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Al Jazeera. "Haiti: Six months on." Fault Lines.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/faultlines/2010/07/20107614463473317.html>

<sup>10</sup> Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights & Centro de Justicia Global. Keeping the Peace in Haiti? March 2005.

her testimony before the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva last June.<sup>11</sup> Refugee International's report condemned the inadequate resources dedicated to GBV response and prevention. The official UN response stated it was "worth noting that sexual violence has been a serious problem in Haiti long before the earthquake."<sup>12</sup> Considering the RI report stated that local agencies are now handling three times as many cases of sexual violence, such defensive statements by the UN are absurd. The Security Council has mandated MINUSTAH to specifically address GBV for nearly six years of "peacekeeping."<sup>13</sup> Why is the UN continually referring to pre-earthquake levels of GBV and poverty as an excuse for their failures?

## Standards to be Ignored; Right to be Violated

During her testimony, Mrs. Villard-Apollon also took the opportunity to remind the Council that the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement call for the consultation of Haitian women and ensure their participation in decisions that impact their lives.<sup>14</sup> In the months since the disaster, references to the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement have led to less than encouraging responses. Humanitarian officers in OCHA cluster meetings, have often referenced these principles as non-

binding and irrelevant.<sup>15</sup> They have repeatedly stated that principles do not constitute law, only standards, especially in regards to forced eviction of IDPs. The guiding principles are very much grounded in international law, not withstanding the indifference by UN officials behind desks in Geneva, New York, and at the logistics base here in Haiti.<sup>16</sup> But, denigrations of the principles is a grave disservice to the families living under torn tarps, in circumstances that continue to deteriorate, facing violence and deprivation of aid in order to force them off both private and public



*Community meeting held by KOFAVIV to discuss conditions in camps, gender-based violence, and forced evictions of IDPs.*

land.<sup>17</sup> The unavoidable conclusion by Haitians and the international community is that cluster meetings are "too disconnected from the reality outside of the UN compound," causing those within to embrace a perspective which repeatedly blames and demonizes the victims of the disaster.<sup>18</sup>

As with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, similar reactions by UN officials to

<sup>11</sup> Oral Intervention of Malya Villard-Apollon, United Nations Human Rights Council.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Secretary General. "Comments from spokesperson for the Secretary General regarding Refugee International's report on Haiti." October 7, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> SRES 1325, 1612, 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1892 #19

<sup>14</sup> Oral Intervention of Malya Villard-Apollon, United Nations Human Rights Council.

<sup>15</sup> Author's personal experience.

<sup>16</sup> Kalin, Walter. Annotations to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The American Society of International Law and The Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement, 2000. [http://www.asil.org/pdfs/study\\_32.pdf](http://www.asil.org/pdfs/study_32.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> International Action Ties. We became garbage to them: Inaction and complicity in IDP expulsions. August 14, 2010. <http://www.internationalactionties.org/?p=35>

<sup>18</sup> Refugees International. Haiti: Still Trapped in the Emergency Phase. Refugees International. October 6, 2010. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/haiti-still-trapped-emergency-phase>



The Sphere Project minimum standards in disaster response have been witnessed on many occasions.<sup>19</sup> One of the highest ranking members of the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Haiti was reported to have said during a meeting of humanitarian leaders, "Sphere standards can not be obtained in Haiti, so don't bother trying."<sup>20</sup> This in a country of 1.3 to 2.1 million displaced, some 1300 recognized IDP camps, and only one single camp that meets these minimum standards.<sup>21</sup> Either "minimum" is a bar set too high for the UN/OCHA response, or trying to do so is more than the UN/OCHA leadership and the high ranking actors in the response feel the Haitian people deserve, hence the constant references to the conditions in Haiti *prior* to the earthquake and the debilitating structure and restrictions that prevents the lower ranking officials in the response from engaging with the Haitian community. There has been another explanation to the UN's paralysed response that appears to be even more accurate, this one coming from Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

Given the context of the RI report to which the UN was responding, Mr. Nesirky's reference to the provision of specialist services for camps by MSF was unexpected.<sup>22</sup> MSF certainly has one of the best humanitarian records as a large international NGO in Haiti and is deservedly known to be well respected by both the Haitian population and the international community. Seeking their extensive expertise to provide much-needed services to Haiti's internally displaced is as it should be. What was surprising about the specific reference by the UN was that, in 2006, MSF had released one of the most critical of the reviews of the UN/OCHA cluster system and emergency responses of 2004-2006.<sup>23</sup> MSF characterized this system as having "inappropriate or slow response, difficulty understanding strategies and agendas, poor coordination, and poor distribution of aid in vulnerable areas"(MSF). MSF's "United Nations: Deceptive Humanitarian Reforms?" makes many of the same points as RI's 2010 report, "Still Trapped in the Emergency Phase," and concludes that MSF will not participate in the OCHA cluster system.

## Still Trapped in Deception

Refugees International's report states that "being integrated into MINUSTAH, OHCHR has the disadvantage of not being perceived as neutral by many parts of Haitian civil society." In varying forms, this perception of the response is expressed to IAT members nearly every day spent in the camps attending camp meetings and conducting interviews with IDPs and camp leadership. The clearly defined political agenda of the MINUSTAH operations was well documented as it entered Haiti in 2004 and began its violent incursions into Cite Soliel and other neighborhoods.<sup>24</sup> The political agenda led MINUSTAH's very own force commander Lieutenant-General Augusto Helena Ribeiro Pereira to testify before a Brazilian congressional commission, stating explicitly that "we are under extreme pressure from the international community to use violence."<sup>25</sup> On this occasion the UN's commander, who resigned from his

<sup>19</sup> International Action Ties. "Towards a More Just Response: Rights of Internally Displaced People in Haiti." April 17, 2010. <http://www.haitiresponsecoalition.org/towards-a-more-just-response-rights-of-internally-displaced-people-in-haiti/>

<sup>20</sup> Cluster member who requested anonymity.

<sup>21</sup> TransAfrica Forum. Haiti Cherie: A report of field missions to Haiti conducted February – June 2010. July 12, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations Secretary General. "Comments from spokesperson for the Secretary General regarding Refugee International's report on Haiti." October 7, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Medecins Sans Frontieres. United Nations: Deceptive Humanitarian Reforms. December 18, 2006. [http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=95542E25-5056-AA77-6C6F0623221C3658&method=full\\_html](http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=article&objectid=95542E25-5056-AA77-6C6F0623221C3658&method=full_html)

<sup>24</sup> Hallward, Peter. Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment. 2007: Verso, London, and Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights & Centro de Justicia Global. Keeping the Peace in Haiti? March 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Pelzer, Tim. Canada plays big role in propping up Haiti regime. January 10, 2005. Znet.

position, and the Haitian IDPs are in agreement. MSF accurately described the same situation, referencing UN/OCHA disaster response by stating that "in the UN's view, humanitarian action remains subordinate to the UN's political arm and that humanitarian aid comes second to the political objectives pursued by the peacekeeping missions."<sup>26</sup> In order to enact the political will of the United Nations, MINUSTAH and OCHA can not allow for the inclusion of a Haitian population that has a plan of their own for their country. Blocking the will of the Haitian people has been a UN political objectives from the very beginning.<sup>27</sup>

Subordination to this political arm of the MINUSTAH intervention runs deep and has been witnessed on all levels in the paralyzed disaster response. The intentions of political heavy weights behind MINUSTAH's presence in Haiti often appear openly and influence OCHA cluster meetings, with little to no regard for the rights the IDPs. During a Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM) meeting, one example was recorded by members of IAT. While discussing the list of camps that were to be relocated due to a flood risk, an IAT member posed the question as to why Camp San Lwi Gonzague had been on the list when it obviously was not at risk of flooding. Well-documented threats of eviction and restriction of humanitarian aid by the private school owning the land were ongoing.<sup>28</sup> The meeting was taking place after the majority of IDPs had been removed to another camp from the tree covered grounds of San Louis Gonzague, a relocation that can be classified as "not really voluntary and result[ing] in further repeated displacements."<sup>29</sup> After pressing for a clear answer numerous times, one of CCCM cluster leads, an International Organization of Migration (IOM) official, casually responded to the questions of the involuntary removal, answering finally with honesty, "oh, that one was political." Considered one of the most prestigious school in Haiti and having an administration referred to by the IDPs that took shelter on the school grounds as "the same people as the government," San Louis, also has the legacy of graduating Haitian Dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, arms distributor Andy Apaid of the coup backing



*Camp San Lwi Gonzague after the removal of many of the IDPs, sent to the prepared land of Carreduex, which has suffered floods, erosion, and destruction of shelter due to sun and wind.*

<http://www.zcommunications.org/canada-plays-big-role-in-propping-up-haiti-regime-by-tim-pelzer>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, see 22.

<sup>27</sup> Hallward, Peter. Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment. 2007: Verso, London

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum: IDP Forced Removal and Relocation Updates - International Action Ties. TransAfrica Forum. April 12, 2010. <http://www.transafricaforum.org/policy-overview/where-we-work/haiti-earthq-2010/forced-idp-reloc-memo-41210>, and Open Letter to Father Patrick Belanger, St. Louis de Gonzague, April 26, 2010, and Schuller, Mark. Sowing Seeds of Hope or Dependence? July 9, 2010. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/sowing-seeds-of-hope-or-s\\_b\\_640679.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-schuller/sowing-seeds-of-hope-or-s_b_640679.html)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, and Refugees International. Haiti: Still Trapped in the Emergency Phase. Refugees International. October 6, 2010. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/haiti-still-trapped-emergency-phase>.

"Group 184", and 2004 coup leader Guy Phillippe. Political indeed. No reference was made by the CCCM cluster leads to the obvious violations of the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement or to the involuntary relocation that the Housing Law and Property (HLP) Working Group within the Protection Cluster characterizes as not being consistent with international norms, standards, and best practices.

## Occupation in a Peacekeeper's Uniform

While Spokesperson Nesirky elected to not address the specifically-cited failed structure of the OCHA response in Haiti, the response to the RI report did point out the recent increases of UN military personnel carrying out random patrols and both UN Police and UN military stationed in a total of 6 of the nearly 1300 recognized camps. When reviewing these exact figures that he says "may or may not be helpful", we can side more towards the "not helpful," giving the information provided by the five and a half years of independent human rights



*One of the over two hundred families force out of Camp Immaculee.*

reporting on Haiti since the UN began its mission. The political will of the mission, not the number of troops, was the defining issue at hand when Camp Immaculee in Cite Soleil was being violently forced off the land on which it was located with no protection offered.

The IAT report "Vanishing Camps at Gunpoint: Failure to protect Haiti's IDP's" raises the point, "if the UN's military and law enforcement personnel 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."<sup>30</sup> The question is not the numbers of troops, but the objectives of the mission which dictate the orders which these troops are obliged to follow. The October 15<sup>th</sup> demonstration described below illustrates this point. Regardless of the quantity of troops, MINUSTAH can not provide protection and security to the Haitian people as long as their priorities are suppressing popular social movements.

In the current state of the peacekeeping mission and OCHA response, with virtually no input from the communities in which patrols are taking place and the near-complete lack of communication capabilities, these personnel increases fall short of reassuring. This is a view shared by members of the peacekeeping force. During a meeting between community members and UN military personnel on their base in Cite Soliel, the unit's lieutenant openly admitted to the camp committee and IAT members that an increase of patrols was not sufficient to actually protect the IDPs within the camps.<sup>31</sup> This is to

<sup>30</sup> International Action Ties. Vanishing Camps at Gunpoint: Failing to Protect Haiti's Internally Displaced. July 14, 2010. [www.internationalactionties.org/IAT\\_vanishing\\_camps\\_report\\_haiti.pdf](http://www.internationalactionties.org/IAT_vanishing_camps_report_haiti.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



be expected when these troops are being mostly used to "undercut the power and autonomy of Haiti's people" and with the noted UN/OCHA "fundamental dysfunctions."<sup>32 33</sup>

If this does not occur, the efforts of the lower-ranking staff of UN agencies to address the needs of the displaced will be unsuccessful, an occurrence that members of IAT have witnessed throughout the response, from protection to agriculture. In private conversations among colleagues, the well-intentioned and hard working lower-ranking officials have voiced their frustrations with their operational restrictions and bureaucracy.

## Rising Frustration

Corresponding to the dissatisfaction felt by those within the UN/OCHA political system are that of those trying to survive outside of it. Understandable anger among Haitians is on the rise, leading to so-called "security incidents" and more demonstrations against international NGOs and MINUSTAH.<sup>34</sup> While MINUSTAH's head Edmund Mulet downplays the widespread discontent, there were recently three separate demonstrations in the nation's capital organized to express these frustrations during a five day period in October.<sup>35</sup>

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, the day of the renewal of the MINUSTAH's mandate, a demonstration outside the UN logistics base was organized by a number of Haitian groups and IDP camp leaders to voice their opinions of the unacceptable conditions in the camps and the treatment of Haitians at the hands of MINUSTAH. The protesters peacefully blocked the entrance, sang, held up signs, and spray painted slogans on the UN vehicles that pushed their way through, one of which knocked five people into a deep drainage ditch and caused a laceration on the forehead of an international journalist.<sup>36</sup>

Demonstrators' signs were grabbed, broken, and thrown onto the ground by UN personnel. The unarmed demonstrators, human rights monitors, and journalist had UN guns drawn and pointed at them in an attempt to force them to disperse. A live round was fired randomly into the air, wrecklessly escalating the situation. A line of UN personnel presented in riot gear, tear gas on stand-by. Numerous demonstrators met with violence.<sup>37</sup> Not a single violent



*A shelter in Immaculee Displaced, prior to the rain brought by Hurricane Thomas.*

<sup>32</sup> Hallward, Peter. Afterword of the 2010 printing of Hallward's 2008 book, 'Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment' (Verso).

<sup>33</sup> Refugees International. Haiti: Still Trapped in the Emergency Phase. Refugees International. October 6, 2010. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/haiti-still-trapped-emergency-phase>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Al Jazeera. "Haiti: Six months on." Fault Lines.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/faultlines/2010/07/20107614463473317.html>

<sup>36</sup> Center for Economic and Policy Research. MINUSTAH: Securing Stability and Democracy from Journalists, Children, and Other Threats. October 18, 2010. <http://www.cepr.net/index.php/blogs/relief-and-reconstruction-watch/minustah-securing-stability-and-democracy-from-journalists-children-and-other-threats>

<sup>37</sup> Author's presence. Also, video and photos available.

provocation by the demonstrators was witnessed by the numerous human rights and independent monitors on hand until the very end of the demonstration and after a great deal of UN violence, when a single glass bottle was tossed in the direction of a peacekeeper, without enough force to break as it hit the ground. UN officials are claiming otherwise, but there still has not been an official response to questions raised as to why such human rights violations were perpetrated by MINUSTAH peacekeepers and UN personnel.

As with nearly all aspects of MINUSTAH and OCHA operations, this incident occurred without any effort at dialogue. At no time did members of the "peacekeeping" forces request to know who was representing the demonstrators and what their grievances were. Both political objectives and faulty communications could be at blame for the suppression of one of the most basic of democratic rights. A brief review of MINUSTAH's history with Haitian demonstrations will show the destruction of basic freedoms of opinion as normal; yet they remain completely unacceptable if we are to be honest about the events that have occurred.

## More of the Same

Peter Hallward's most recent afterword to his comprehensive account of recent Haitian history, Damming the Flood, explains why we are now seeing more of the same:

Just a few days after the immediate trauma of 12 January, it was already clear that the U.S. and UN led relief operation would conform to the three main counter-revolutionary strategies that have shaped the more general course of the island's recent history. (a) It would foreground questions of 'security' and 'stability', and try to answer them by military or quasi-military means. (b) It would sideline Haiti's own leaders and government, and ignore both the needs and the abilities of the majority of its people. (c) It would proceed in ways that directly reinforce and widen the immense gap between the privileged few and the impoverished millions they exploit.

Recommendations from this report will be minimal in an attempt to not repeat what has been requested with consistency. During the past five and a half years of occupation and nearly ten months of disaster response, numerous requests for a more just response that have been made by the Haitian people and independent human rights groups and experts have been completely ignored.

## Honesty Missing

First and foremost, Haitians within the displaced camps are requesting more than just transparency, but also the honesty that has been missing; honesty from the United Nations about the events of the past, the current situation, and what is being planned largely without any Haitian civil society participation. No dialogue has existed, much less one that is based in honesty and transparency.

Though the Cholera epidemic remains on the minds of the Haitian population, the foreign and domestic authorities in Haiti seem more concerned with an infection by the most dangerous of plagues: insight and understanding.<sup>38</sup> Restrictions of access for Haitians,

---

<sup>38</sup> Ed. Arnone, Anthony. *The essential Chomsky: Foreign Policy and the intelligentsia*. New Press Essential, 2008.

specifically the most vulnerable, need to be dismantled and systems of inclusion must be developed. Though touted as great advances, International Organization for Migration information kiosks are not community engagement, not community participation, and not community direction, and many IDPs have referred to them as insulting to the people in the camps. Haitian community groups and organizations are the most logical and necessary place to search for the development of such systems, given their unmatched cultural and historical understanding.<sup>39</sup>

The lower-ranking officials caught within the UN system are encouraged to publically express their opinions that remain only available in private conversation and which are not to be quoted or referenced. As one such individual said, career advancement can not be traded for the suffering of Haiti's displaced.

Only from here can the paralysis that has brought progress in Haiti to a halt begin to unravel and give room for positive movement. Without this, Haiti's people will see more excuses instead of equality, resources wasted instead of relief, cholera instead of needed change, and subordination instead of stabilization.



*Camp San Lwi Displaced, Carreduex, Port au Prince.*

---

<sup>39</sup> A short list of ten such organizations provided by Beverly Bell in: From Disaster Aid to Solidarity. Other Worlds, April 2010.



**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 South and Nippes Departments. Partnering with the Haitian community groups and organizations on the ground, IAT was one of the first organizations to reach Port-au-Prince and begin relief work.

For questions, comments, and more information please contact:

IATayiti@gmail.com

Author: Mark Snyder, +509 3905 6513

[msnyderiat@gmail.com](mailto:msnyderiat@gmail.com)

Edited by: Deepa Panchang

Special thanks to Ansel Herz for the provision of a great deal of research material and to the Haitian community members that permit us in their lives.

**[www.internationalactionties.org](http://www.internationalactionties.org)**