



# Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti

*Fighting for the human rights of Haiti's poor*

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## **One Year After Earthquake, Displaced Haitians Ask for Stop to Forced Evictions from Camps**

Port-au-Prince, Haiti, January 10, 2011 — Displaced victims are gathering on January 12 to commemorate the devastating earthquake by asking for an end to forced evictions from displacement camps that threaten to render them homeless a second time. Forced evictions are a major source of insecurity for the over one million displaced people still living in camps. They are increasing as the anniversary approaches and the country faces political insecurity.

Hundreds of camps have been threatened with eviction or actually evicted as people purporting to be landowners stake claim to the land. In September, the U.N. Secretary General stated that 29 percent of 1,268 camps studied had been closed forcibly, meaning the frequently violent relocation of tens of thousands of people. Most of the time, communities are left homeless again without any other place to go.

Landowners began evicting displaced communities within weeks of the earthquake. Over the past year, entire settlements have been destroyed and residents who refuse to vacate their camps are routinely terrorized and beaten by the police.

At a camp near the Port au Prince airport, the landlord started threatening the community of 310 families with eviction in April with the help of 24 armed Haitian national police. While the residents were able to negotiate a longer stay, the landlord has once again threatened to force them out, and their deadline coincides with the one-year anniversary. Residents fear that January 12 will again mark the day they become homeless.

The International Organisation of Migration released updated statistics on the internally displaced persons (IDP) population in Haiti, which showed a significant decrease in the number of people living in camps between July and December. To call this “light at the end of the tunnel” ignores the underlying causes, which include the eviction of thousands of people who are often forced to leave without alternative shelter.

Human rights monitoring bodies have expressed increasing concern over the failure to protect IDPs in Haiti. In November, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [issued urgent measures](#) instructing the government to adopt a moratorium on evictions and ensure that persons who are evicted are provided alternative housing that meets minimum standards of public health and security. The Haitian government has not heeded these measures.

Slow rubble removal, sluggish repairs of earthquake-damaged housing, and the lack of a comprehensive resettlement policy have hampered IDPs' ability to move out of the camps and into more permanent housing, exposing them to human rights violations including gender-based violence and vulnerability to cholera due to dismal sanitation in the camps. The UN reports that only five percent of rubble has been removed. Thirty-seven percent of the 250,000 houses surveyed by the government were determined to need repairs before residents could move back in, but as of mid-December, only 2,000 houses had been repaired and 30 thousand transitional shelters built.

The government and the international community are in a holding pattern following fraudulent elections in November that would not yield a legitimate new government. In order to move forward in the rebuilding process, Haiti needs new, fair, inclusive elections to ensure the inauguration of a government with the popular support to lead the country to implement a solution to the current crisis.

Said **Nicole Philips**, Esq., "Until a comprehensive settlement plan is adopted by the Haitian government, earthquake victims will continue to live in temporary IDP camps and be subject to unlawful evictions. Evictions that do not follow all due process guarantees set out by Haitian and international law should not be tolerated by the Haitian government or international agencies."

Said **Mario Joseph**, Esq., "The Haitian law guarantees the right to housing. The Haitian government must immediately stop all forced expulsions, verify land ownership titles and nationalize by decree all empty and idle lands in the hands of purported landowners."

Said **Seide Sylvie**, a woman's rights activist and camp resident, "adequate housing is the most urgent issue facing victims of the earthquake. Housing affects everything – from our ability to sleep at night, to our health and ability to care for our children. Forced evictions are presenting yet another threat to our security."

**For more stories on forced evictions, see *What Do Threats of Forced Eviction Look Like: Before an Eviction? After an Eviction?***

**Event Details:** *We Will Not Forget, The Struggle Has Just Begun - Public Demonstration to Protest Evictions*

Wednesday January 12, 2011 at 9 a.m.

Protest starts in front of the Ministry of Health on Rue St. Honore near the General Hospital. (Contact for details).

Organized by the Initiative to Resist Evictions of the Internally Displaced