



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Fighting for the human rights of Haiti's poor

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Human rights group sues mayor in Haiti for terrorizing earthquake victims during unlawful evictions

On Wednesday, June 1, 2011, the *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux* (BAI) will file a complaint with Haiti's National Prosecutor against Delmas Mayor Wilson Jeudy for his recent spree of illegal evictions in displacement camps created after the January 12, 2010 earthquake. Grassroots human rights organizations and tent camp residents also plan to stage a protest at 10 am at the Ministry of Justice, while the complaint is being filed, to draw attention to their grievances. The protest will end before the nation's Parliament.

At least three camps housing approximately 1,000 displaced persons in the Port-au-Prince suburb were destroyed last week by Mayor Jeudy, his armed security personnel and units from the Haitian National Police, as a part of the Mayor's declared mission to remove camps from public lands. The police came with little to no warning and raided the camps under the pretext of searching for criminals, slashing tents with machetes and assaulting residents trying to protest the raids.

BAI's complaint on behalf of individual victims of the evictions charges Mayor Jeudy with violations of the rights to life and housing protected by Haiti's Constitution and crimes against the person and property, articulated in the Haitian Penal Code. "As a public official, Mayor Jeudy is not above the law," said BAI Managing Attorney Mario Joseph. "Haitian law only permits him to enter private domiciles, regardless of where they are located, with a judicial mandate or a Municipal Decree published in advance, neither of which the Mayor had to justify his acts."

Last week's evictions in Delmas are just a snapshot of a larger epidemic of forced evictions that began almost immediately after the earthquake struck 16 months ago. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued directives to the Haitian government last fall to impose a moratorium on evictions and protect displaced communities from the violence often associated with forced evictions. However, due in large part to government inaction, the International Organization on Migration estimated that 166,000 people were still facing imminent threats of eviction as of April.

Mayor Jeudy tried to defend his actions by arguing that the public spaces occupied by tent camps needed to be open to the communities at large. "Mayor Jeudy is ignoring his duties as a State agent," said BAI attorney Jeena Shah. "Since Haiti is a party to the American Convention on Human Rights and a host of other human rights treaties, Mayor Jeudy has a duty to not only protect displaced persons from forced evictions, but also facilitate their resettlement into decent housing."

While the Mayor believes that many of the camps' residents have housing but were staying in camps to access free services, the appalling conditions of displacement camps make apparent the fact that if the earthquake victims had somewhere else to go, they would have left long ago.

Founded in 1995, the *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux* (BAI) is the only public interest law firm in Haiti. With the support of the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, the BAI uses litigation, advocacy, documentation and grassroots empowerment to advance the rule of law and challenge the unjust structures that violate the human rights of Haiti's poor majority. Visit haitijustice.org. Follow @IJDH.