



Picking up the pieces. A homeless child made homeless again searches for personal possessions after the destruction of a displaced peoples camp at the hands of the Mayor of Delmas and his Street Control Brigade. "We don't have anywhere else to go. If we had homes do they really think we'd be living here?" cried one uprooted 52-year old resident, Yvonne André.

Photo: Etant Dupain of Bri Kouri Nouvèl Gaye www.brikourinouvelgaye.com

Relocation, Relocation, Relocation—Haiti style

Victims Become Victims – Again

A mass of torn tarpaulins, broken stakes and a jumble of personal possessions – it looked like an early season hurricane had passed through. In fact it was a demolition job by armed thugs working for Wilson Jeudy the Mayor of Delmas, a commune in Port-au-Prince. "We don't have anywhere else to go. If we had homes do they really think we'd be living here?" cried one uprooted 52-year old resident, Yvonne André.

The demolition of five small camps, three rimming the intersection of Delmas and the Airport Road, in an area known as Kafou Ayopò on May 23 and two others, two days later, on Delmas 3 and Delmas 5, has sent shockwaves as far as Capitol Hill in Washington

DC. Illegal evictions of internally displaced people (IDPs) have been a growing problem for over a year in Haiti. But the Delmas evictions were the first since the earthquake by a public official from public land and as such set a dangerous new precedent.

To April 1st 2011, the 44,017 persons evicted from 45 separate sites on which they had sought refuge after last January's earthquake had all been ejected by private landlords from private land, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN agency in overall charge of IDPs. The future of another 165,977 displaced people at 178 camps was, as of April 1, under "negotiation" with landlords.

But the real numbers for those evicted or threatened with eviction are almost certainly much higher. The IOM's figures are based solely on the camps in their database. Those camps that are not registered are invariably more vulnerable to everything, including forced eviction. "Frankly, we can't even keep score, let alone help everyone," says Mark Snyder of International Action Ties working to protect those threatened.

The Delmas evictions took place in broad daylight at the hands of Wilson Jeudy's Street Control Brigade, supported, crucially, by heavily armed national police. At one site shots were fired into the air. As for negotiation: "We do not evict people by agreement," in-

sisted Mayor Jeudy.

It would not stop there, he promised. "These were public spaces.... they can't be privatized by just anyone," he told the daily *Le Nouvelliste*, co-opting, broadening and redefining the neo-liberal economic jargon of the new government. Others occupying such spaces would be "chased away" the mayor said. Public spaces would be "cleansed."

With glorious irony, Jeudy asserted that the camps housed brothels, thieves and street thugs. There was no mention of his responsibility for their arrest, if true. For 18 months now, residents of IDP camps have suffered an epidemic of rape, sexual assault and

continued on page 2 ►



Demanding housing, fighting the status quo. Reynold Sanon, co-ordinator of FRAKKA, the leading Haitian housing rights coalition “It’s the government’s debt for the responsibility for housing it never took on before the earthquake...” Photo: Joris Willems, HSG

► from page 1

theft as a result of the failure of the authorities to patrol the camps and investigate reported crimes.

Evictions by any Means, any Name

Evictions started in earnest in June 2010. By then there were about 1.5 million displaced people in over 1,500 camps in the earthquake-affected zones according to IOM. All such evictions were and are illegal. “There is a lengthy legal process required by Haitian law to evict,” says Mario Joseph of Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), who have taken up the case of thousands of camp-dwellers. “No one is respecting that process.”

There was no reaction from the government, hence as so often in Haiti impunity became a catalyst. As evictions – often by brute force – accelerated, government activity on the other side of the equation, providing alternative sites, if not alternative shelter, was non-existent. The victims became victims again – of both the landlords and the Haitian government.

As the rainy season of 2010 turned the camps into muddy quagmires and hurricanes threatened, a familiar question arose in Haiti says Mark Schuller, an anthropologist who has studied the IDP issue. “Is it property rights or people’s rights? The rights of landowners or the rights of the destitute and dying?”

As the old Haiti dusted itself down, flexed its muscles and began to establish its *ancien régime* monopoly control of policy, profit, power and property post-earthquake – including profitable businesses that NGO hand-outs had

disrupted – the answer became increasingly obvious. Exclusion and exclusivity would be the new norm, just as it had been the old. It was back to the future.

“It was all enshrined in the government plan published two months after the earthquake,” says Reynold Sanon, a coordinator of the leading housing rights coalition, FRAKKA (The Force for Reflection and Action on Housing). “You have the right to be the same landowner, the same renter, you were before the earthquake. In other words the declared aim was the *status quo* and that is basically a sort of apartheid.”

But even getting back to the *status quo* required action. Despite serious prodding from the NGOs, some of whom had the money, means and for a while at least motive to construct homes, the Haitian government has refused to exercise its powers of eminent domain to buy land to build new houses. The sole exception was a new camp at Corail Cesselesse (see *Haiti Briefing*, Number 66) but that houses a mere 13,000 people.

Ironically, by the sixth-month anniversary of the earthquake in July, the government’s own “do nothing” default had lasted long enough to spawn new allies in wishing the IDPs away. As the NGO’s humanitarian budget lines expired, many of the smaller outfits started to pack up and leave. Even larger ones cut back. As they did so, contract “services” to the IDP camps – at this stage little more than water or the occasional emptying of portable toilets – were cut back.

The humanitarian stage of the relief operation was over, key agencies declared. Vague noises were made about not wanting to encourage “dependency” – ironically largely induced by inaction on general job-creation, whether that was rubble clearing, construction or services.

All this prompted Haitian government officials to start playing similar background mood music. NGOs were creating a dependency culture by continuing to service the camps, officials claimed off the record. The camps were magnets for people seeking handouts, even, they argued, impediments to reconstruction. Many of those in the camps had other “options,” they insinuated. They need to move.

It was the ultimate game of blaming the victim, of redefining needs as wants, of displacing the blame. Haiti needed to move on government officials insisted, whilst themselves remaining immobile. Effective, efficient, expedited rubble clearing would have been a good start yet by July 2010, Haiti was not even at that first base. Since then, there has been some movement but no substantive change.

Throughout this period the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission (IHRC) whose whole *raison d’être* as a donor-backed quango was the lack of capacity of the Haitian government, remained as dysfunctional and invisible as the sovereign institution it had usurped. The only difference, given all the funds it had, was that it had even less excuse. “It runs like a square wheel,” squeaked one of its donor members – a foreigner.

“Way Home” – for the Homeless

So it was that from about July 2010 the humanitarian agencies’ interest in a short-term solution and the Haitian government’s instincts for no long-term solution found common ground. The victims of both would, of course, be those languishing in the mud of the camps. As time went on, the camp populations were inevitably, increasingly, Haiti’s poorest and most vulnerable people. And now, of course, being people who had lost most if not everything, they were much more numerous than pre-earthquake.

Leading the way for the humanitarian agencies was the leader of the pack on shelter and housing, the United Nations’ IOM. In the face of the wave of illegal evictions, government/IHRC inertia, and pressure from its head office, the IOM began to devote more and more of its time to taking the law and the IDPs’ futures into its own hands. It began “negotiating” evictions.

For the most part, there was no real negotiation because the IDPs had no negotiating power. In a market where surveys indicated residential rents had risen sevenfold since the earthquake, and where every scrap of open space was occupied by other IDPs, the lucky ones left their encampments with small sums of cash. The unlucky ones left with nothing.

Rarely did such IDPs have anywhere else to go. That was precisely why they were in a fetid, unsanitary IDP camp in the first place. The one thing the IOM’s much-vaunted Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) did not keep track of the one indicator that really mattered: what happened to IDPs once they were “negotiated” out of existence in a camp.

All this of course was not only illegal under Haitian and international law – it was a blatant violation of the UN’s own Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which forbade evictions. In November 2010, after legal action by BAI and others, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) demanded the Haitian government declare a moratorium on evictions and restore minimum standards of care and security for those already evicted. Nothing changed. If anything, evictions increased.

In the end, the sheer horror of the camps in the rainy season as cholera spread, services stopped and hurricanes threatened, added to the impact of the evictions themselves to thin the ranks. Some IDPs certainly found alternatives – one option was refuge in buildings

colour-coded yellow by donor-funded structural surveys, meaning repairable but not yet repaired. Others were desperate enough to flee to homes colour-coded red, meaning not repairable and liable to collapse at any time but in the absence of other options, shelter.

There was also a minimal amount of relocation to the questionable transitional or T shelters. By the first anniversary of the earthquake, some 31,656 of these wood-framed “slums of tomorrow” had been built. By then, the number of IDPs in IOM-registered camps had virtually halved. By April 2011, the number was down to 680,000 – in the official camps.

With the fall in numbers in the camps, the rhetoric changed further. Failure, in terms of rehousing, relocating, restarting, was defined as success. Under pressure from bosses driven by “performance” indices back at head office, the IOM prepared to declare victory to get out. It put out a surreally ironic statement on its “exit strategy” entitled “The Way Home” for people who had no homes to go to. “I think they mean the IOM’s own way home,” quipped one journalist.

“We are finally beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel,” declared the IOM Haiti Chief of Mission, Luca Dal’Oglio at his first anniversary press conference in January 2011. The fact that the IDP camp population was down to just 810,000 was, he asserted, “a hopeful sign that many victims of the earthquake are getting on with their lives.”

At least *Bri Kouri Nouwèl Gaye*, the Haitian Kreyòl newspaper, saw through this mendacious spin. What does he mean by “getting on with their lives” it asked, in a story headlined **False Source of Pride for the IOM**. “The only way a second displacement can be considered a success is that it absolves the IOM of its responsibility for the living conditions of the estimated 700,000 former camp residents.” Bullseye.

A second displacement is exactly what it was for most. New camps sprung up everywhere – unregistered ones. Inevitably, these were on more precarious sites, further from any possible assistance, with no chance of any services, least of all water or sanitation. With cholera raging, nothing could have been more disastrous, for the IDPs, if not the IOM. “It was, it is, a classic case of individual progress, systemic failure,” says anthropologist Mark Schuller.

Standards, what Standards?

In fact, it was Professor Schuller and his team’s painstaking surveys of the camps that had revealed another reason IOM senior management may have wanted the camps closed down. They were a disgrace – measured by their own standards. In fact, the camps were so bad the humanitarian agencies had had to abandon their own standards to legitimize them.

During the summer of 2010, Schuller and his team visited a random sample of 108 camps in the metropolitan area – one in eight – on the IOM’s DTM index. Some 40.5% did not have access to water, even though a river counted as access to water – and 30.3 per cent did not have a single toilet. Of those that did have toilets, each one was shared by an average of 273 people and about a quarter of those had yet to be emptied, even once.



Minimal progress, systemic failure. Two reports based on surveys of IDP camps by teams led by Professor Mark Schuller. Done six months apart, the reports reveal the full horror of conditions, the real failure of the international community.

In January 2011, in the wake of a raging cholera epidemic, with sanitation, water and above all, the interplay between the two an urgent, life-and-death priority, Professor Schuller’s team returned to those camps they had surveyed. Those that were still open that is. There had been marginal progress, with 26.5% of camps not now having access to a toilet and 37.6% no access to water.

Such minimal progress had to be considered a staggering failure, given the time that had elapsed – twelve months – and the hundreds of millions of dollars spent. To make things worse, the cholera epidemic had hit Haiti just as the imperative to stop servicing and supplying the camps accelerated, something one NGO sanitation employee characterized as “a death sentence” for many displaced people.

But here too the ground for such

a failure had been prepared long before. There are rights-based standards and indicators for IDP camps that govern everything – space, shelter, sanitation. Agreed by UN agencies, the Red Cross and hundreds of NGOs as far back as 1997, the Sphere Humanitarian Charter, colloquially known as Sphere Standards, was actually jettisoned as soon as the international relief effort hit the ground in Haiti.

“The problem with Sphere as with any standards is that they are not adapted to the particular situation in Haiti,” complained Mego Terzian, a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) emergency desk officer. “The problem with MSF is they are too stupid to realize we have these standards for a reason,” retorted one Oxfam sanitation worker. “Such as preventing a cholera epidemic.”

Indeed. Think about that. Then think about Sphere Standards.

roduced to Haiti by the international community. By accident yes, but also by gross, culpable negligence.

Who in UN headquarters approved, allowed, allocated Nepalese troops, coming from a country with an endemic cholera problem to a country like Haiti with no cholera but living conditions perfectly suited to an epidemic? Who failed to test those troops set for deployment? We will of course never know their names – nor will the relatives of the Haitian dead.

Impunity Rules OK? Maybe Not

So just as Wilson Jeudy was able to act in the context of impunity, just as the Haitian government has been allowed to fail to act for IDPs with the cover of the international community, and the international community allowed to fail by blaming the government, cholera and its consequences wreaked their havoc in a context. President Michel Martelly now comes to power within that context – which includes a number of dangerous precedents, not least a whole year of evictions topped by those of Mayor Jeudy.

Martelly has announced plans to close six IDP camps in his first 100 days. The model, as far as it can be deduced, is something between that of the IOM and Mayor Jeudy – whose actions Martelly has refused to condemn. Resettlement packages are to be offered to camp residents but there is no guarantee of alternative housing before the six camps targeted are closed. It could turn out to be eviction lite.

Once again, the motive seems to be to push the homeless somewhere else, to make them disappear somewhere less visible, not least out of Pétionville, the wealthy suburb on the hill, two of whose main public squares are still packed with homeless people. Both these plazas are at the top of the Martelly list. “It’s not about aesthetics, it’s not about emptying camps,” asserts Nigel Fisher the UN’s chief humanitarian co-ordinator for Haiti. “It’s about providing alternatives.”

Indeed. How forcefully the international community – namely Nigel Fisher representing us – will make that clear to President Martelly is uncertain. Despite holding all the cards, paying all the bills, running what is effectively a UN trusteeship in Haiti, the UN and the leading international donors seem remarkably reluctant to use any of their leverage to advocate for the most needy, even on

continued on back page ►

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Shelter from the Storm. Delegates gather to listen to speakers at the International Forum on the Right to Housing held at Karade camp, Port-au-Prince in late May. The key demand: a massive popular house-building programme. Photo: Joris Willems, HSG

► from page 3

the basis of their own guidelines and minimum standards.

After all, negotiating IDPs “disappearance” in order to appear to be resettling the homeless has been a staple UN ploy to date. President Martelly’s plan for IDPs seems to be an extension of the same approach – with donors’ money being used as his pay-off to them.

Fortunately, there is another context too. The singular lack of accountability, the refusal to consult with IDP camp leadership, the naked violation of the right to housing enshrined in the Haitian constitution and the sheer horror of the conditions in the camps, have all stimulated organization. FRAKKA, which, with the lawyers of BAI, led the resistance to evictions early on, is now part of

a specialist coalition, the Initiative Against Eviction. All these groups joined many others in the organization of an International Forum on Housing in Haiti in late May.

Held at Karade camp, 35 displacement committees and 40 Haitian grassroots groups represented by hundreds of delegates strategized with housing activists from Latin America and South Africa at the three-day forum. The core demand is for a mass housing programme, something FRAKKA co-coordinator Reyneld Sanon, sees as a debt to the dead. “It’s the government’s debt for the responsibility for housing it never took on before the earthquake – a major reason for the scale of the death toll,” he points out.

A final declaration from the International Housing Forum was followed by a week of action including a sit-in in front of parliament, a demonstration and a press conference – all brought into sharp focus by Mayor Jeudy’s evictions.

On June 1, several hundred activists accompanied BAI lawyers to file a citation of complaint with Haiti’s National Prosecutor against Mayor Jeudy on the basis that he had no judicial mandate or a Municipal Decree to permit him or his agents “to enter private domiciles.” Yes, even tents. “As a public official Major Jeudy is not above the law,” BAI’s lead lawyer Mario Joseph told the press. Yes, even Haitian law. ■

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY! Don't miss the Haiti Support Group's AGM: Saturday 9 July in Stockwell, South London

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We have another star line up for you this year – proof that we have gone truly global!

★ **Anne McConnell**, HSG co-ordinator, just back from Port-au-Prince with the latest news and views from all our partners in civil society organisations. Housing, assembly-plant organisation, agriculture, women's issues, economic alternatives, Anne will take your questions, hear your views.

★ **Else Boonstra**, of Dutch public relations firm BBO has just completed a detailed report on how HSG and its European partners can influence EU policy on Haiti more effectively. Come and hear what you can do with us.

★ **Phillip Wearne**, direct from Washington DC and regular participation in Haiti think tanks and advocacy groups in the U.S. Find out where US policy is going under the Bill-Hillary Clinton double act in the Michel Martelly era. How can we make the truth be known?

● Date: **Saturday 9 July 2011** ● Time: 3.00-6.00pm – followed by informal social ● Venue: Stockwell Methodist Church – small hall at back of church on left hand side, Jeffreys Road, Stockwell, London SW4 6QX (nearest tube Stockwell) ● More details, full programme, on our website: www.haitisupportgroup.org



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