

## **Cholera victims organize to receive compensation pledged by the United Nations**

*Following the public apology of former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, providing reparations to victims seems to be the final step to be taken. Between October 2010 and 2016, a fateful 800 000 people have been infected with cholera and 10 000 killed. The UN is planning a "new series of significant actions in response to this crisis" after having acknowledged, for the first time since the epidemic started, that it caused the contamination.*

The *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux* (BAI) is continuing its fight for reparations for victims of cholera. As the standard bearer of this struggle over past years, the human rights body is working actively with victims, providing them with training and organizational skills so as to enable them to be the main beneficiaries of the \$ 200 million in reparations promised by the UN to the families and communities most affected by the epidemic. Another two hundred million has been promised to improve the water distribution and sanitation system in the country. This makes a total of \$400 million over two years.

The BAI's director, Mario Joseph, began his marathon in Mirebalais (Central Plateau), where the cholera epidemic broke out in October 2010. The human rights activist met with no less than 200 people who identify as victims or relatives of cholera victims. After showing them the video of Ban Ki-moon asking forgiveness of the Haitian people and apologizing for not having done enough about the cholera epidemic and its spread in the country, Mario Joseph explained to the people the two possibilities for remedies: "community projects or individual compensation".

### **Individual compensation demanded unanimously**

The human rights activist, always very critical of the UN, also presented those attending with the advantages and disadvantages of each model to enable them to choose with full knowledge of the facts. After finishing discussions in focus groups, the inhabitants of Mirebalais unanimously chose individual reparation. Their reason, they say, is that the families of the victims have not received any benefits despite all the sufferings they have endured. Each group spokesperson, recounting the wishes of the people to receive a sum of money in compensation for the damages they have undergone, was applauded by everyone in attendance.

To calm things down, Mario Joseph reminded people that they must be able to prove through their medical certificate that they have contracted cholera or that members of their families have died because of the epidemic. Moreover, he said he believed it was his duty to accompany the victims to the end in order to find justice and reparation. "Padon pa geri malad," he stated repeatedly, to motivate the crowd on the need to organize themselves better so as not to let this \$200 million compensation slip through their fingers.

Three times, in Creole, French and English, Ban Ki-moon apologized to the Haitian people before the General Assembly, a few weeks before leaving his position as UN Secretary-General. "On behalf of the United Nations, I want to say very clearly: we apologize to the Haitian people." A mea culpa for the role of the organization in the cholera epidemic that ravages the country.

When, last December, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, still in office, declared in the UN General Assembly in Creole, French and English that "the United Nations profoundly regrets the loss of human life and suffering caused by the cholera epidemic ", it was a victory for all experts, victims and human rights organizations who have called for compensation for the damages caused by the cholera epidemic, which has killed nearly 10 000 people and infected 800 000 since 2010.

See more at: <http://www.lenouvelliste.com/article/168687/les-victimes-du-cholera-se-preparent-a-recevoir-lindemnisation-promise-par-les-nations-unies#sthash.F6Pvrp2C.dpuf>