



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
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**Justice Groups Urge UN Human Rights Official Visiting Haiti to Examine Rights Implications
of the UN Cholera Epidemic**

Advocates Stress that UN Accountability is Prerequisite to Rule of Law in Haiti

(Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Boston, USA, Thursday, August 23, 2012) — Human rights advocates in Haiti and the United States urge United Nations (UN) Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonoviæ, visiting Haiti this week, to examine the human rights implications of the cholera epidemic brought to Haiti by UN troops.

Cholera has killed more than 7,500 Haitians and infected over 580,000 since it was introduced by UN peacekeepers in October 2010. Despite overwhelming evidence that the UN caused the epidemic, the world body continues to deny responsibility and has not adequately responded to stop cholera's killing.

"We applaud Assistant Secretary-General Šimonoviæ's emphasis on rule of law as a necessary for the enjoyment of human rights in Haiti," said Mario Joseph, Haiti's leading human rights lawyer, who represents cholera victims in their claims at the UN. "To be a credible advocate for rule of law, however, the UN must demonstrate by example and be accountable for the cholera epidemic it caused."

In November 2011, over 5,000 cholera victims filed [claims](#) with the UN, seeking a) investments in clean water and sanitation to control the epidemic, b) compensation and c) a public apology. The case is seen as a litmus test of the UN's commitment to human rights in practice, and [international pressure](#) is mounting on the organization to respond justly. In his [2012 report](#), UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Haiti, Michel Forst, acknowledged that "silence or denial" is counter-productive to the UN's mission in Haiti.

Cholera bacteria have infiltrated drinking water sources throughout Haiti, and the epidemic is the worst single-country cholera epidemic in modern times. "The UN cholera is a massive violation of the internationally-recognized right to water for millions of Haitians, and of the right to life for thousands," said Brian Concannon Jr., who is co-counsel for the victims. "We hope that Assistant Secretary-General Šimonoviæ sees that the UN has a historic opportunity to advance the enforceability of water and sanitation rights globally, and save thousands of lives, by acting consistently with its professed ideals."

For more information, including case documents and background materials, see www.IJDH.org.

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