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## **UN Expert Calls for Accountability as Organization Ducks Cholera Suit** *Says UN Should Be First to Honor Accountability Principles*

**(BOSTON, February 28, 2014)**—Gustavo Gallón, the United Nations (UN) Independent Expert on Human Rights in Haiti, said in his recent [report](#) on the state of human rights in the Caribbean nation that victims of the cholera epidemic in Haiti should be compensated for the harm they have suffered. The statement comes at a time when the organization faces similar claims from cholera victims in a U.S. federal class-action [lawsuit](#) filed in New York.

“Diplomatic difficulties must be overcome to ensure a prompt end to the epidemic and provide full compensation for the damage suffered by the Haitian people,” the Independent Expert wrote. A growing chorus of voices from [current](#) and [former](#) UN officials has called for justice for the victims, but Gallón is the first to make the demand in a publicly available official UN document.

On October 9, 2013, the *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux* (BAI), the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) and civil rights law firm Kurzban, Kurzban, Weinger, Tetzelli & Pratt filed suit against the UN, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), and two UN officials on behalf of victims of the deadly epidemic, seeking accountability for the reckless introduction of cholera to Haiti. Gallón’s report comes as the deadline to answer the lawsuit has lapsed for MINUSTAH and the individual defendants. The UN itself has failed to respond to a motion that service of process is complete.

“The defendants’ failure to accept service or to respond to the lawsuit continues the UN’s pattern of avoiding justice despite its clear-cut responsibility for the epidemic,” said plaintiffs’ co-counsel and IJDH Staff Attorney Beatrice Lindstrom. Amidst reports that the UN has asked the U.S. government to defend its position, the United States is currently weighing whether to take a position in the lawsuit by their March 7 deadline.

Gallón’s strong language calling for compensation stands in stark contrast to the UN’s continued refusal to even consider the victims’ claims. Gallón recommends that those responsible for the epidemic be punished in accordance with the UN’s [Basic Principles and Guidelines](#) on the Right to a Remedy, which call for broad remedies for victims of gross violations of human rights. “[T]he UN should be the first to honor these principles,” the report states.

“By calling for compensation in accordance with the guidelines that govern the gravest human rights violations in the world, Gallón is rightfully recognizing the gravity of the situation,” said co-counsel for the plaintiffs, Jeff Brand. “The UN itself warns that another 2000 people may die in 2014, yet it’s not responding adequately to the crisis or victims’ calls for justice.”

The epidemic has killed more than 8,500 and injured nearly 700,000 people to date. Said IJDH Staff Attorney Nicole Phillips, who is based in Haiti and works with the BAI, “As the report itself notes, silence is the worst possible response, and more and more people, both within and outside the UN, are speaking up and urging the UN to take responsibility for its actions.”