

They include IFJ (International Federation of Journalists), AIJA (Afghan Independent Journalists Association), and CPAJ (Committee to Protect Afghan Journalists). Currently Afghan journalists are also boycotting the Afghan Wolesi Jirga (lower house of Parliament) to protest its enactment of repressive media laws and the consequent imprisonment of journalists.

## 12

### Another Massacre in Haiti by UN Troops

**Sources:**

HaitiAction.net, January 21, 2007

Title: "UN in Haiti: Accused of Second Massacre"

Authors: Haiti Information Project

Inter Press Service

Title: "Haiti: Poor Residents of Capital Describe a State of Siege"

Authors: Wadner Pierre and Jeb Sprague

Student Researcher: William Leeming

Faculty Evaluator: Dianne Parness

Eyewitness testimony confirms indiscriminate killings by UN forces in Haiti's Cité Soleil community on December 22, 2006, reportedly as collective punishment against the community for a massive demonstration of Lavalas supporters in which about ten thousand people rallied for the return of President Aristide in clear condemnation of the foreign military occupation of their country. According to residents, UN forces attacked their neighborhood in the early morning, killing more than thirty people, including women and children. Footage taken by Haiti Information Project (HIP) videographers shows unarmed civilians dying as they tell of extensive gunfire from UN peacekeeping forces (MINUSTAH).

A hardened UN strategy became apparent days after the demonstration, when UN officials stated they were entering Cité Soleil to capture or kill gangsters and kidnappers. While officials of MINUSTAH have admitted to "collateral damage," in the raids of December 2006, they say they are there to fight gangsters at the request of the René Préval government.

But many residents and local human rights activists say that

scores of people having no involvement with gangs were killed, wounded, and arrested in the raids.

Although MINUSTAH denied firing from helicopter gunships, HIP captured more than three hours of video footage and a large selection of digital photos, illustrating the UN's behavior in Haiti.

An unidentified twenty-eight-year-old man, filmed by HIP, can be seen dying as he testifies that he was shot from a circling UN helicopter that rained gunfire on those below. HIP film also shows a sixteen-year-old, dying just after being shot by UN forces. Before dying he describes details of the UN opening fire on unarmed civilians in his neighborhood. The wounded and dying, filmed by HIP, all express horror and confusion.

IPS observed that buildings throughout Cité Soleil were pock-marked by bullets; many showing huge holes made by heavy caliber UN weapons, as residents attest. Often pipes that brought in water to the slum community now lay shattered.

A recently declassified document from the US embassy in Port-au-Prince reveals that during a similar operation carried out in July 2005, MINUSTAH expended 22,000 bullets over several hours. In the report, an official from MINUSTAH acknowledged, "given the flimsy construction of homes in Cité Soleil and the large quantity of ammunition expended, it is likely that rounds penetrated many buildings, striking unintended targets."

Frantz Michel Guerrier, spokesman for the Committee of Notables for the Development of Cité Soleil based in the Bois Neuf zone, said, "It is very difficult for me to explain to you what the people of Bois Neuf went through on Dec. 22, 2006—almost unexplainable. It was a true massacre. We counted more than sixty wounded and more than twenty-five dead, among [them] infants, children, and young people."

"We saw helicopters shoot at us, our houses broken by the tanks," Guerrier told IPS. "We heard detonations of the heavy weapons. Many of the dead and wounded were found inside their houses. I must tell you that nobody had been saved, not even the babies. The Red Cross was not allowed to help people. The soldiers had refused to let the Red Cross in categorically, in violation of the Geneva Convention." Several residents told IPS that MINUSTAH, after conducting its operations, evacuated without checking for wounded.

Following the removal of Haiti's elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide government (see *Censored 2005*, story #12), up to one thousand Lavalas

political activists were imprisoned under the US-backed interim government, according to a Miami University Human Rights study.

A study released by the Lancet Journal of Medicine in August 2006 estimates that 8,000 were killed and 35,000 sexually assaulted in the greater Port-au-Prince area during the time of the interim government (2004-2006). The study attributed human rights abuses to purported “criminals,” police, anti-Lavalas gangs, and UN peacekeepers.

HIP Founding Editor Kevin Pina commented, “It is clear that this represents an act of terror against the community. This video evidence shows clearly that the UN stands accused, once again, of targeting unarmed civilians in Cité Soleil. There can be no justification for using this level of force in the close quarters of those neighborhoods. It is clear that the UN views the killing of these innocents as somehow acceptable to their goal of pacifying this community. Every demonstration, no matter how peaceful, is seen as a threat to their control if it includes demands for the return of Aristide to Haiti. In that context it is difficult to continue to view the UN mission as an independent and neutral force in Haiti. They apparently decided sometime ago it was acceptable to use military force to alter Haiti’s political landscape to match their strategic goals for the Haitian people.”

#### **UPDATE BY KEVIN PINA**

Since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his Lavalas political party were ousted from power on February 29, 2004, accusations of gross human rights violations have persisted in Haiti. While the Haitian National Police (HNP) received training and assistance from the UN following Aristide’s ouster, they were also accused of summary executions, arbitrary arrests, and the killing of unarmed demonstrators. The actions of the Haitian police became so egregious that even UN police trainers (CIVPOL) began to question the motives of their commanders and the mission’s objectives. The Haiti Information Project (HIP) received the following correspondence in response to a May 8, 2005 article “UN accommodates Human Rights Abuses by police in Haiti.”<sup>1</sup> This is the first publication of that correspondence:

Just want to reinforce your observations as all being accurate.

I am one of the 25 US CIVPOL here on the ground in

Haiti, having arrived last November. As a group we are frustrated by the UN's and CIVPOL's unwillingness to interpret their mandate aggressively. I have been pushing them to conduct investigations into all the shootings and other significant Human Rights violations with no success. The Police Commissioner and command staff shows little interest and claim the mandate does not allow them to do this. Unfortunately I have countless examples.

The corruption in the HNP is massive with little interest in addressing the problem. Just keep up the pressure, I don't know what else to do.

Stephen MacKinnon  
Chief, Strategic Planning Unit  
CIVPOL-MINUSTAH

Chief MacKinnon provided HIP with information and documents that painted a disturbing picture of a UN operation more obsessed with political embarrassment caused by mounting demonstrations for Aristide's return than interest in reigning in human rights abuses committed by the HNP.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) now stands accused of having itself committed several massacres in the seaside shantytown of Cité Soleil. This area of the capital served as a launching site for massive demonstrations demanding the return of President Aristide and for an end to what they called the foreign occupation of their country.

The Brazilian military has responsibility for leadership of the UN military forces in Haiti and is authorized to use deadly force. They are at the top of the command structure and their influence on the overall mission should not be understated. More importantly, there is a direct parallel between Brazilian military tactics utilized by UN forces in Haiti and similar military-style assaults used by the police in their own country.

The Brazilian military police have been accused of firing indiscriminately in the poor slums of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro called favelas. This was highlighted in an Amnesty International report "Brazil: 'They come in Shooting': Policing socially excluded communities," released on December 2, 2005.<sup>3</sup>

This is similar to the tactics authorized by the Brazilian generals in Haiti. It has resulted in several high-profile massacres committed in the poor slum of Cité Soleil where protestors challenged the UN's authority by continuing to launch massive demonstrations demanding Aristide's return and condemning the UN's presence in Haiti. In each instance, the UN and the elite-run Haitian press demonized the entire community as being criminals and gangsters and/or collaborators of criminals and gangsters. While it is true that armed "gangs" operated in the neighborhood and a few claimed they were aligned with Aristide's Lavalas movement, these military raids had a clear correlation to the ongoing demonstrations and opposition to the UN presence in Haiti.

Cité Soleil was terrorized on July 6, 2005 when Brazilian commanders authorized a raid by UN forces with the stated aim of routing gangs in the area.<sup>4</sup> For Aristide supporters, the raid was a preemptive strike by the UN to dampen the impact of protests on Aristide's birthday, planned to take place only nine days later on July 15. It also represented the first time UN forces purposely sought to assassinate the leadership of armed groups claiming allegiance to Aristide's Lavalas movement.<sup>5</sup> By the time UN guns stopped firing, countless unarmed civilians lay dead with many having been killed by a single high-powered rifle shot to the head. Since then, documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show the US Embassy and various intelligence agencies, were aware of the excessive use of force by UN forces in Haiti on July 6, 2005.<sup>6</sup> Despite being heavily censored by US officials, what emerges is clear evidence of the disproportionate use of force by UN troops in Cité Soleil.

December 16, 2006 saw another large demonstration for Aristide that began in Cite Soleil and only six days later on December 22, Brazilian commanders would authorize a second deadly raid that residents and human rights groups say resulted in the wholesale slaughter of innocent victims. The unspoken parallel of Brazil's role in leading the UN's military strategy in Haiti is the fact that terror tactics such as these have been their modus operandi in their own country.

In the early morning hours of Feb. 2, UN forces entered Cité Soleil firing indiscriminately and their victims were two young girls killed as they slept in their own home.<sup>7</sup> Massive demonstrations were scheduled to take place five days later demanding the return of Aristide throughout Haiti on Feb. 7. While these demonstrations

went largely unreported by the international corporate media, this stood in contrast, to the avalanche of news stories filed two days later on Feb. 9, when UN forces launched yet another deadly military operation in Cité Soleil.<sup>8</sup> Although these raids were ostensibly to rid the neighborhood of gangs, they followed the same pattern and relationship to demonstrations for Aristide's return and military tactics used by Brazilian commanders in previous UN operations.

The only rights organizations documenting the loss of life and destruction of property resulting from the UN raid on December 22, 2006, as well as previous and subsequent UN military operations, were the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) and the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI).<sup>9</sup> HIP, the organization originally authoring the article being recognized by Project Censored, is a news agency that has extensive video evidence and interviews from Cité Soleil taken the same day these attacks by UN forces were executed. HIP offers any human rights organization the opportunity to view the documentary footage and evidence supporting the claims of Cité Soleil residents that massacres by UN forces have been committed against them. Unfortunately, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States have remained conspicuously disinterested and silent about this evidence.

For further information and updates about Haiti, please visit [www.haitiaction.net](http://www.haitiaction.net), [www.ijdh.org](http://www.ijdh.org), [www.HaitiInformationProject.net](http://www.HaitiInformationProject.net), [www.haitianalysis.com](http://www.haitianalysis.com), [www.canadahaitiaction.ca](http://www.canadahaitiaction.ca), and [www.ahphaiti.org](http://www.ahphaiti.org).

## Notes

1. Haiti Information Project, "UN accommodates Human Rights Abuses by police in Haiti," May 8, 2005. See [http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/5\\_8\\_5/5\\_8\\_5.html](http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/5_8_5/5_8_5.html).
2. Internet correspondence received from Steve McKinnon to HIP May 12, 2005.
3. Amnesty International Report, "Brazil: 'They come in Shooting': Policing socially excluded communities" December 2, 2005. See <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGAMR190252005>
4. Haiti Information Project, "Evidence mounts of a UN massacre in Haiti," July 12, 2005. See [http://www.haitiaction.net/News/HIP/7\\_12\\_5.html](http://www.haitiaction.net/News/HIP/7_12_5.html).
5. Haiti Information Project, "The UN's disconnect with the poor in Haiti," December 25, 2005. See [http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/12\\_25\\_5/12\\_25a\\_5.html](http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/12_25_5/12_25a_5.html).
6. Haiti Information Project, "US Embassy in Haiti acknowledges excessive force by UN," January 24, 2007. Article based on FOIA documents obtained by College of DuPage Geography Professor Keith Yearman. See [http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/1\\_23\\_7/1\\_23\\_7.html](http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/1_23_7/1_23_7.html).
7. Haiti Information Project—February 2, 2007. UN terror kills Haiti's children at night [http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/2\\_2\\_7a/2\\_2\\_7a.html](http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/2_2_7a/2_2_7a.html).

8. Haiti Information Project, "Massive demonstrations in Haiti catch UN by surprise," February 9, 2007. See [http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/2\\_9\\_7/2\\_9\\_7.html](http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/2_9_7/2_9_7.html).
9. Haiti Information Project, "The UNspoken truth about gangs in Haiti," February 15, 2007. See [http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/2\\_15\\_7/2\\_15\\_7.html](http://haitiaction.net/News/HIP/2_15_7/2_15_7.html).
10. Video images documenting UN military operations on July 6, 2005 and December 22, 2006 were taken by HIP videographer Jean-Baptiste Ristil.

### **UPDATE ON HAITI BY JEB SPRAGUE AND WADNER PIERRE: Poor Residents of Capital Describe a State of Siege**

Initially neither one of us thought of ourselves as journalists, but we were so shocked by events on the ground in Haiti (which were rarely being covered) that we felt compelled to write about them. In the dominant rhetoric of donor groups and corporate media coverage we found that the voices of grassroots civil society were absent. Of any country in the western hemisphere, Haiti's culture is filled with a vitality for democracy, personal interaction, and dialogue. Radio is the most popular form of communication partially because of economic accessibility and partially because it encourages discussion and debate. From researching our stories we've come to see that two civil societies exist, one tightly connected with foreign donors, the foreign embassies present in Port-au-Prince and the large media outlets; and another civil society, a pulsating grassroots that is usually ignored by foreign journalists and donors.

The testimonials and opinions of the donor and foreign government backed elite or middle class based civil society groups are propelled in the media spotlight as unbiased and independent, *the* Haitian civil society. These are the groups that have bilingual language skills, often higher education, and the technological tools to communicate their programs to a transnational audience. Aid groups fly them abroad to make presentations or provide them with training seminars in the Dominican Republic or Washington, DC.

In the slum- and rural-based communities another civil society exists outside of the international limelight. The members of this civil society are often broke and rarely make a profit from their positions. They are relatively unknown and unheard of by the outside world. These groups, popular and well organized on the ground, have broad participation. They carry out large mobilizations, they fill the streets with friends and family, they organize strikes, they are on the radio, and they organize co-ops, literacy centers, and community programs.

So in our articles we have tried to provide as many direct quotes and testimonials as possible from this grassroots civil society. At the same time we try to place this along side the official rhetoric, holding the official organs responsible, confronting them and asking them the hard questions (which they are often shocked to hear). But most important are the voices of the victims of violence, the wife and husband who lost their children, the unemployed man wounded on the side of the street; these are the people that are rarely heard in the mainstream media. Part of this is because corporate journalists choose to spend their time with elites, especially in developing countries, and part is because editors are dependent on their advertisers and don't see these stories as viable.

MINUSTAH's operations in Cité Soleil, since writing our article, have continued. But in recent months the killings have lessened (although a man just last week was shot and killed by UN troops/early June 2007). Over the months that followed our article, MINUSTAH was able to arrest one of the most well-known gang leaders, Evens Jeune, along with many of those within his group. MINUSTAH has claimed to have set up hospital clinics in the buildings used by the gangs, but on-site visits have revealed empty houses with no hospital clinics and no UN staffers. Haitian government promises of job programs have been slow to materialize in Cité Soleil. UN officials have purposely downplayed or ignored the protests of the poor demanding reparations. However, a number of community schools and health organizations, such as the Lamp Foundation, continue to do good work in Cité Soleil. Some human rights groups, such as the GDP, BAI, CONODH, and AUHMOD, continue to be active in the neighborhoods, but other locally formed groups such as the HNVNPC have gone back to their jobs, mostly in churches and schools.

The population of Cité Soleil has suffered horribly, either caught in the crossfire or purposely targeted. The socio-economic situation and dire poverty in Cité Soleil is a direct result of the prolonged policies of wealthy countries and donor institutions; forcing and destabilizing out of power those elected Haitian governments that have advocated key policies of sovereignty and social investment, while opposing privatization and neoliberal adjustments whenever they can. Rarely told is how Haiti's police throughout the 1990's and early 2000's were systematically manipulated by the US embassy,

CIA, and Haitian elites—this had a direct result on the security situation in Haiti. Economic instability heightened by coups and prolonged political crises—promoted by elites unhappy with the popular electoral choice—have cost Haiti jobs and development. All of this has pushed Haiti further into the abyss.

When international institutions and governments are busy coordinating these kinds of egregious activities, we felt it the responsibility of journalists, activists, and academics (especially those lucky enough to have the resources) to investigate; all while speaking with the poor and finding out their concerns. From this experience we founded a website, [haitianalysis.com](http://haitianalysis.com), to connect foreign young journalists with young Haitian journalists in poor communities—with the specific purpose of covering poor communities and grassroots organizing. Soon after our IPS article appeared, members of the Haitian diaspora in New York were able to raise thousands of dollars to help in the funeral expenses of the two young Lubin daughters, Stephanie, seven, and Alexandra, four, killed by UN ammo according to their parents. Wadner's photos of the young girls have appeared in numerous Haitian newspapers and websites of various languages. The Lubin parents, distraught, wanted everyone to know about what had occurred on that night of February 1st 2007. To our knowledge, the United Nations has never launched an investigation into the killing of the two Lubin daughters. We will continue asking that they do.

For more information, we suggest that readers view websites such as [ijdh.org](http://ijdh.org), [hurah.revolt.org](http://hurah.revolt.org), [haitianalysis.com](http://haitianalysis.com), [pih.org](http://pih.org), [haiti.quixote.org](http://haiti.quixote.org), [jubileeusa.org](http://jubileeusa.org), and [haitilabor.org](http://haitilabor.org).