

## **U.S. – Canada Delegation Condemns Human Rights Situation in Haiti**

The Latin American Solidarity Coalition, from the United States, and the Canada Haiti Action Network, wish to express our grave concern about human rights in Haiti.

Our delegation came to investigate human rights violations, and in particular, violations by the United Nations' MINUSTAH forces. We will send a report of our delegation's findings to the United Nations, to the United States Congress, to President Barack Obama, to the Canadian government, and to Prime Minister Stephen Harper. We will also circulate our findings to the media in our respective countries.

From December 28<sup>th</sup> to January 3<sup>rd</sup> our delegation has collected testimony from 71 residents of Port-au-Prince, Cité Soleil, Bel Air, and Petionville.

We have learned of MINUSTAH attacks and assaults, including sexual assaults. The most serious of these occurred in Cité Soleil and in Bel Air. The attacks have resulted in injury and death, with no compensation for the victims or their families. Our report will urge the United Nations' General Assembly to investigate MINUSTAH attacks, and to arrange both financial compensation and medical aid to victims and survivors.

We have further learned of the exclusion of political parties from the April 2009 and upcoming February 2010 elections. We are particularly concerned that the Provisional Electoral Council, handpicked by President Rene Preval, has arbitrarily excluded Fanmi Lavalas, the most popular political party in Haiti. Our report will urge the governments of the United States and Canada to stop their funding of the February 2010 election, and to send no election observers, as observation might thereby legitimize the February 2010 election.

We have learned as well about severe problems in the judicial and prison system. Prison conditions in Haiti are unconscionable. Furthermore, prisoners often spend months or years in custody without charges. This violates the Haitian constitution. Our report will

express particular concern with the case of Ronald Dauphin, who has yet to receive a proper hearing after years in prison. Our report will also call on the Canadian and United States governments to urge Haiti to launch a formal and public inquiry into the disappearance of political activist Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine.

We have heard from broad sectors of Haitian society about their terrible economic situation. Access to a living wage remains a concern for the majority of the Haitian people.

Industrial workers face waves of layoffs through privatization. These include employees at the Port, the sanitation sector, and Teleco. Our report will urge our respective governments to encourage investment in Haiti that offers a living wage.

In the informal sector, vendors and merchants face threats to their livelihood. This pressure comes from both government policies designed to favour large merchants, as well as criminal attacks on their inventory. Peasants and farmers in rural areas similarly report that they receive no help from the government.

We have especially heard that the people in Haiti feel that conditions in their country have grown worse since the 2004 coup against President Jean Bertrand Aristide. People have seen little benefit of aid promised to Haitian society by the international community, but channelled ineffectively through non-governmental organizations. Our report will urge our governments to launch formal investigations of their aid to Haiti.

Above all, our delegation discovered that the Haitian people believe that their government neglects them and ignores their demands. The main demand we heard was for the immediate return of President Jean Bertrand Aristide. Our report will urge the Canadian and American governments to put immediate pressure on the government of Haiti to send a passport to President Aristide, who remains in exile in South Africa five years after the 2004 coup sponsored by the United States, Canada, and France.