

CARLI:

Using Radio Waves to Fuel Haiti's Climate of Fear and Terror

By Richard Sanders, editor, *Press for Conversion!*

Immediately following the 2004 coup, Haiti's Comité des Avocats pour le Respect des Libertés Individuelles (CARLI)—the Lawyer's Committee for Individual Rights—which received support from U.S. and Canadian government sources (including CIDA), played a significant role in escalating the country's volatile climate of fear.

CARLI was a member of the Group of 184,¹ the elite-run coalition that masterminded civil society operations in support of the 2004 coup against Aristide. (See "NCHR-Haiti," pp.3-32 and "The G184," pp.33-43.)

CARLI's main contribution to Haiti's post-coup reign of terror was what might at first blush seem to be an innocuous, if not beneficial, service: "to set up, operate and publicize a telephone 'hotline' for receiving human rights abuse complaints."² For this program, which included publishing regular "written reports detailing the alleged abuses, and...the names of alleged abusers," CARLI received \$54,000 from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the U.S. agency whose staff credited themselves with ousting Aristide.³ (See "CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of 'Justice,'" pp.29-31.)

In its 2004 annual report, the U.S. State Department referred to CARLI as one of the "major human rights organizations" upon which it relied. It cited CARLI and NCHR-Haiti as groups that "were active and effective in monitoring human rights issues, meeting frequently with government officials," and praised them for doing "frequent media appearances" and issuing "objective reports on violations."⁴

Such glowing commendations, and money, from the leading force behind the coup, burdened CARLI, NCHR and other such groups with a heavy price—their neutrality.

The University of Miami's Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) (see pp.15-16) said that CARLI—which it called a "small, vol-

unteer-based organization"⁵—

"denied it was being partisan, but failed to explain why it was putting out specious accusations against Lavalas supporters, why it made no accusations of human rights abuses by forces opposed to the elected government, or why it did not denounce acts by the then newly installed interim government."⁶

The names gathered as part of CARLI's "IFES and USAID-sponsored"⁷ program, were distributed to the coup regimes' "police, the U.S. Embassy, the OAS,"⁸ "Canadian authorities, and various anti-Aristide radio stations for the names to be read on air."⁹

The Agence Haitienne de Presse, one of the few media outlets not owned by the country's pro-coup business elite, revealed that CARLI distributed its list "to the press each week of all those that anonymous callers accuse through the hotline. This hotline has become a key element in the terror campaign."¹⁰

This critical assessment was shared by other human rights organizations that were not linked to the U.S. and Canadian governments through funding. For example, the National Lawyers Guild (see p.9) reported that the publication of CARLI's "list" was

"forcing innocent people into hiding and to fear for their lives, preventing people from returning to their jobs and schools, and...creating the possibility of extrajudicial execution squads and non-judicial arrest[s]."¹¹

The NLG's 2004 report also condemned CARLI for used "conclusory language condemning the person for...murder and attempted murder, and calling for their immediate arrest."¹²

The first unanimous recommendation of NLG's report stated:

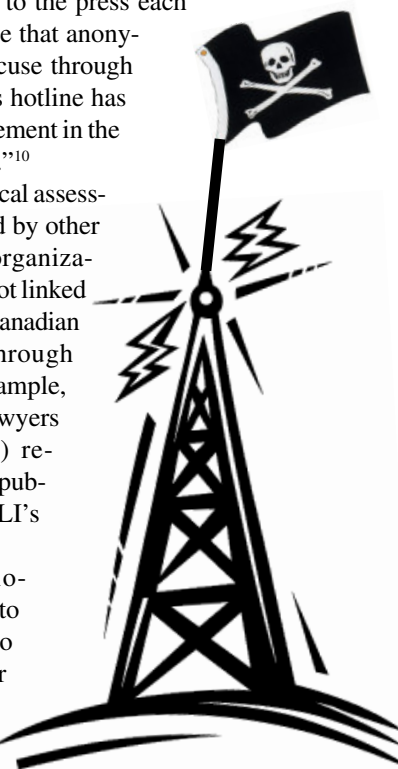
"We demand that Temporary Protective Status be granted to all Haitians facing political persecution, including those whose names are read daily on Haitian radio stations."¹³

The NLG also made the following criticisms of CARLI's work:

- "There is no evidence that CARLI conducts any investigation before condemning the named person. The person 'condemned'...is never contacted to answer to the allegations.
- "CARLI insisted that it conducts a thorough investigation of each of the 60 to 100 monthly calls and verifies all information beyond a reasonable doubt before publicly condemning a person.... CARLI has no full time staff, ...[has] only two lawyers at the office, and all are volunteers.
- "The February list contained the names of approximately 85 [alleged] human rights violators ...and their political affiliations.... All were Lavalas supporters....
- "Prior lists observed also contained only ...Lavalas supporters.
- "CARLI leaflets... publiciz[ing] the 'hotline' are ... in French, not Creole. Two-thirds of Haiti's people [predominantly poor, Aristide supporters] do not speak or read French."¹⁴

The Quixote Center (see pp.6-8) shared NLG's critical analysis of CARLI's "list," saying that "each day at 4 pm":

"Radio stations read the names of people who have been blacklisted.... One of the [Fondasyon Trant Septamn] FTS representatives gave the observation mission a copy of the list, with stars next to the names of those who have disappeared al-



ready. Names are read randomly throughout the day, as well.”

The QC report also quoted Patrick Elie, Aristide’s former Minister of Security, as saying: “Names are being listed on the radio, and the political climate is one of a terror campaign against Fanmi Lavalas.” Similarly, the Lavalas Party’s Father Edner DeValcin told the QC human-rights delegation: “[W]hen the radio says your name, you are arrested.”¹⁵

Several U.S. human rights delegations met Lavalas activists who were in hiding after being publicly named by CARLI. The NLG said those targeted “insist that the [CARLI] list exists to serve the political ends of the opposition to the elected government and to instil fear.”¹⁶

The CSHR reported that IFES became a “strong funding source” for CARLI in October 2003, but “gradually reduced its aid after Aristide’s ouster and ended it in August 2004.”¹⁷ CSHR noted that “as those ties have loosened, CARLI’s reporting has been much more objective.”¹⁸ CSHR said that CARLI’s “staff members admitted that the increased balance in their reporting has come as IFES’ grip on them has eased off.... They conceded that IFES had controlled much of their activities.”¹⁹

CARLI staff even confessed “that under pressure from IFES to produce and disseminate names of Aristide or Lavalas supporters...it often published names after a superficial investigation or no investigation at all. CARLI now concedes that the practice may have resulted in innocent people being subjected to threats, violent attacks and arrests or forced into hiding...”²⁰

While CARLI staff admitted their U.S.-funded program “may have” harmed innocent people, they also said they were considering accepting more grants from IFES. This shows just how susceptible organizations can be to political influence from funding sources.

The Canadian government is also guilty of funding Haitian groups to conduct its pro-coup agenda. CIDA bankrolled many of the same anti-Lavalas organizations that were under the sway of U.S. agencies, including CARLI. According to a CIDA report, the Canada gave \$10 million dollars to

In the first month after the 2004 coup, Patrick Elie told the Quixote Center’s human rights delegation to Haiti that:

“Haiti is in total chaos.... Names are being listed on the radio, and the political climate is one of a terror campaign against Fanmi Lavalas.”

After earning his PhD in organic chemistry from McGill, Elie was a professor for a dozen years in Haiti before coordinating Aristide’s anti-drug trafficking efforts (1991-94). As the Lavalas government’s Minister of Defence (1994-95), he was in charge of dismantling Haiti’s military.

During a cross-Canada tour in 2006, Elie was repeatedly harrassed by CSIS.

“I am being targeted for the political message that I am bringing to Canada, which is critical of the Canadian government’s policies in Haiti.”



Photo: Jason Pfeifer

an Organization of American States (OAS) for a project that directly benefited CARLI. A significant part of this project was called “Vendredi du CARLI.” This “monthly forum” organized by CARLI “brought human rights specialists together...to discuss various topics with university students, lawyers and several professionals.”²¹

We can only image why on earth CIDA and OAS officials felt that CARLI was qualified for a contract to organize anything related to “human rights.” They must have been aware that CARLI had successfully used radio broadcasts to aid and abet the rabid persecution of Lavalas members and supporters. And, they must have known that CARLI’s one-sided, anti-Aristide slant on “human rights” coincided with the undemocratic, pro-coup policies of the U.S. and Canadian governments. Presumably, it was this very understanding that convinced CIDA and the OAS that CARLI was best suited to conduct these sessions that were designed to influence Haitian professionals and up and coming university students about the proper approach to “human rights.”

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