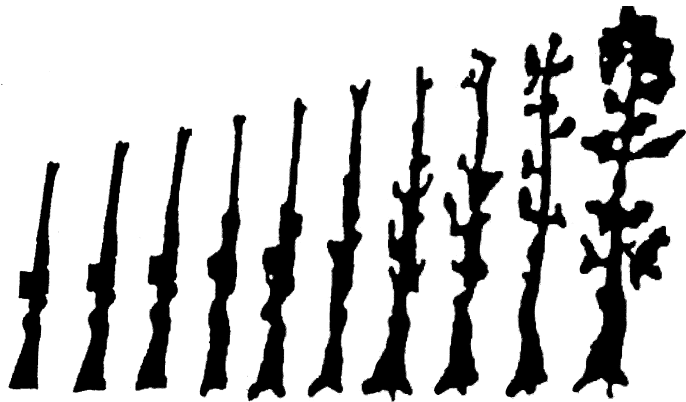
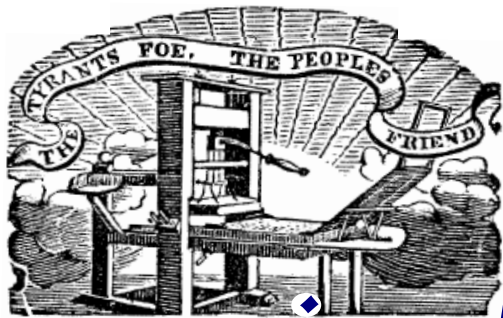


Press for Conversion!



Issue #61 September 2007

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CIDA's Key Role in Haiti's 2004 Coup d'État: *Funding Regime Change, Dictatorship and Human Rights Atrocities, one Haitian "NGO" at a Time*



Over the past few years, hundreds of thousands of Haitians have rallied to support their duly-elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The country's impoverished masses have successfully elected Aristide and his Lavalas Party in two landslide victories but, on both occasions, violent coups have overthrown Haiti's democracy. The 2004 coup was orchestrated by the U.S., Canadian and French governments which worked in close partnership with Haiti's wealthy elite. Together they installed a brutal dictatorship whose reign of terror killed thousands of Aristide's pro-democracy supporters. This issue of *Press for Conversion!* documents how the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) aided and abetted that coup, supported the illegal regime and then covered up widespread, human rights atrocities.

Photo: On Sept. 30, 2006, many thousands marched to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the 1991 coup. The rally was led by the Sept. 30th Foundation, whose leader—Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine—disappeared on August 12, 2007.

CIDA's Key Role in Haiti's 2004 Coup d'État:

Funding Regime Change, Dictatorship and Human Rights Atrocities, one Haitian "NGO" at a Time

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PROLOGUE

In 2004, Haiti's President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was kidnapped and exiled in a well-orchestrated *coup d'état*. This regime change replaced the democratically-elected, Lavalas Party government with a dictatorship that was militarily, financially and diplomatically supported by the U.S., Canada and France. The coup-installed *junta*, led by (unelected) Prime Minister Gérard Latortue and euphemistically called the "Interim Government of Haiti," unleashed a brutal hurricane of systematic human-rights abuses against pro-democracy supporters. For the next two years, Haiti's largely-impooverished population—the vast majority of whom had voted Lavalas and who wanted the return of their elected president—were hit by the unrelenting waves of state-sponsored terror that swept across Haiti.

Hardest hit by this official violence were members and supporters of Aristide's roughly-deposed, legal government. They were hunted down with impunity by police, death squads and former-military men. These brutally violent forces were shamelessly safeguarded by foreign troops sanctioned by the UN Security Council to protect Haiti's "interim" regime.

This was not the first time Aristide and his Lavalas Party administration were unjustly removed from office and subjected to a paramilitary witch-hunt. It was a *deja vu* of 1991, when—just months after being swept into power by voters in a landslide victory that was their first real exercise in electoral democracy—Aristide was ousted in a CIA-backed coup.

The armed men behind the 1991 coup—and their corporate sponsors—returned with a vengeance in the Canadian-backed coup of 2004. During both dictatorships, the most ruthlessly-targeted Lavalas supporters were those living in the destitute, urban neighbourhoods of Haiti's capital, Port au Prince.

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Press for Conversion!

The Last Issue!

A Very Canadian Coup d'état in Haiti:

The Top 10 Ways that Canada's Government helped
the 2004 Coup and its Reign of Terror

This Issue! focuses on CIDA-financed groups in Haiti.

The Next Issue

The next issue will expose CIDA-funded groups in Canada that helped destabilize Aristide's government, supported the illegal regime change and covered up the atrocities of the Canadian-backed Latortue dictatorship: **Alternatives, L'Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace-Quebec, Christian Aid, Centre International de Solidarité Ouvrière, Concertation pour Haïti, FOCAL, International Center for Legal Resources, Oxfam-Quebec, and Reporters Without Borders Canada.**

The Canadian-backed Coup Regime's Reign of Terror:

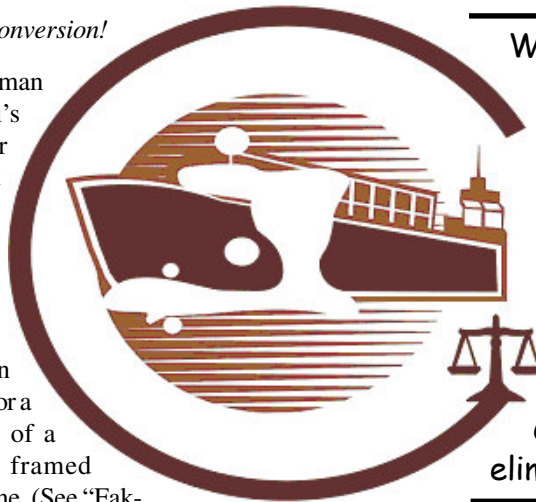
How CIDA's NCHR-Haiti Cleverly Promoted and then Covered up Atrocities

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

Fuelling the deadly flames of human rights abuses that ravaged Haiti's pro-democracy advocates after the 2004 coup, was an organization that received generous financing from the Canadian government. Within a few days of the Canadian-backed coup, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) agreed to give the National Coalition for Haitian Rights-Haiti (NCHR-Haiti) \$100,000¹ for a project to assist nonexistent victims of a bogus "genocide" for which they framed Aristide's Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune. (See "Faking Genocide in Haiti," pp.23-28, and "CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of 'Justice,'" pp.29-31.)

NCHR-Haiti was also funded by American and French government agencies. These were the three governments that masterminded the regime change, and supported the illegal coup-imposed junta of Prime Minister Gérard Latortue.

The financial underwriting of NCHR-Haiti by the very foreign governments that had mentored the coup and its illegal spawn, placed this organization in a blatantly obvious conflict of interest. And, although its many strident statements and reports—before, during and after the coup—were extremely biased and partisan in their opposition to Aristide's legitimate government, NCHR-Haiti was continually relied upon as the world's single most important source



Within days of the 2004 coup, the Canadian International Development Agency, awarded a \$100,000 contract to an extremely biased and partisan organization—the National Coalition for Haitian Rights-Haiti (NCHR-Haiti). This supposed human rights group worked closely with the illegal, Canadian-backed coup regime to eliminate their political opponents.

the coup, it worked in conjunction with Haiti's political opposition, which—largely funded and organized by local business elites and foreign government agencies—worked to promote the atmosphere of anti-Aristide hatred that helped facilitate his ouster. NCHR-Haiti's biased, anti-Lavalas reportage was, of course, lapped up by those foreign governments as they built towards a change in regimes that would empower a more pliable client state in Haiti. Then, after the coup, when Gérard Latortue had been successfully installed, NCHR-Haiti was conspicuously silent about the relentless atrocities that the regime waged against Lavalas supporters. This wilful silence helped provide cover for the grave human rights violations committed by Latortue's "interim government." NCHR-Haiti also ignored the flagrant abuses and indignities perpetrated daily by the UN military force that—under the guise of "peacekeeping"—became a foreign occupation force working in concert with the coup regime's police to mop up remaining opposition, and to prop up Latortue's unjustly ensconced, *de facto* government.

When NCHR-Haiti flexed its formidable propaganda powers, it shamelessly added fuel to the fires of human rights abuses raging across the country: it demonized Aristide; it complimented the coup regime and rebel groups for capturing Lavalas "criminals"; it even pushed the coup-regime's police and UN forces to make even more violent incursions into poverty stricken neighbourhoods to weed out Lavalas supporters, who it derided and dehumanized with the Haitian elite's slang term, *chimère*. (See "*Chimère*: The 'N' word of Haiti," pp.50-51.)

However, it is not enough to say that NCHR-Haiti was a stooge for local Haitian elite and its

foreign supporters. NCHR-Haiti did more than exaggerate the flaws of Lavalas and then hide the human rights abuses that blazed across Haiti during and after the coup. Immediately after the regime change, NCHR-Haiti engaged in a close working partnership with Latortue's dictatorship. The group became, in effect, an arm of the illegal "interim" government by aiding and abetting the commission of human rights vio-



NCHR-Haiti's Executive Director, Pierre Espérance, was a major source of disinformation used by governments, the international media and groups advocating human rights and development. His efforts were instrumental in destabilizing Aristide's popularly elected Lavalas Party, and in aiding, abetting and covering up the coup regime's brutal persecution of pro-democracy activists.

of supposedly-neutral, human rights reports and analysis. Among those who consistently cited NCHR-Haiti were the corporate media, foreign governments, international human rights organizations and CIDA-funded Canadian groups focusing ostensibly on development, peace and democracy.

As a result, NCHR-Haiti played a pivotal role in manipulating global public opinion. In the years leading up to September 2007 (Issue # 61) *Press for Conversion!*

lations in Haiti. It did this, in part, by using unsubstantiated accusations and trumped-up charges that were employed to full effect by the dictatorship to illegally imprison innocent people associated with the popular Lavalas government.

NCHR-Haiti's totally-biased, human rights coverage is exemplified by a media conference entitled: "Boniface-Latorture: the first 45 days."² This report, which focused on criticizing the supposed abuses of Aristide's overthrown democracy while praising Haiti's newly-installed regime, typifies the kind of blame-the-victim approach that permeated NCHR-Haiti's CIDA-funded work. (See "NCHR-Haiti Reviews Coup Regime's 'First 45 Days,'" pp.20-22.)

Unfortunately, many foreign politicians, government agencies, corporate media outlets and international human rights and aid groups used NCHR-Haiti as their primary source while ignoring numerous independent human rights investigations that were conducted in post-coup Haiti. This article reviews reports published by six such U.S.-based organizations with particular attention to their analysis of:

- (a) the human rights abuses being committed,
- (b) the victims being targeted, and
- (c) the main perpetrators of the human rights violations,

The human rights situation in Haiti that was consistently exposed by these six organizations was completely at odds with the picture painted by NCHR-Haiti. And, what's more, the authors of these U.S. delegations all questioned the legitimacy of NCHR-Haiti and were in fact unequivocal in denouncing its extremely biased and partisan perspective.

Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)

The IJDH's document, "Human Rights Violations in Haiti," is perhaps the most comprehensive analysis from the early, post-coup period. It covers abuses reported to its staff in Haiti from late-February til mid-May 2004. It focuses on "attacks against grassroots activists and residents of poor urban and rural areas in Haiti, the type of victims whose stories are often overlooked in reporting on Haiti."³

The report notes that "a general climate of fear and terror exists in the country" but concedes that "it is difficult to assess the actual number of political and extrajudicial killings."⁴ One of its findings however gives a telling indication of the number of political murders, at least during the first month of the coup regime and in Haiti's capital alone. IJDH staff interviewed morgue employees at the General Hospital in Port-au-Prince who "revealed that 800 bodies on...March 7, and another 200 bodies on Sunday, March 28 were dumped and buried in a mass grave at Titanyen."⁵ (Titanyen is where Haiti's military and its death squads had frequently disposed of the bodies during the previous anti-Aristide coup period, between 1991 and 1994.)

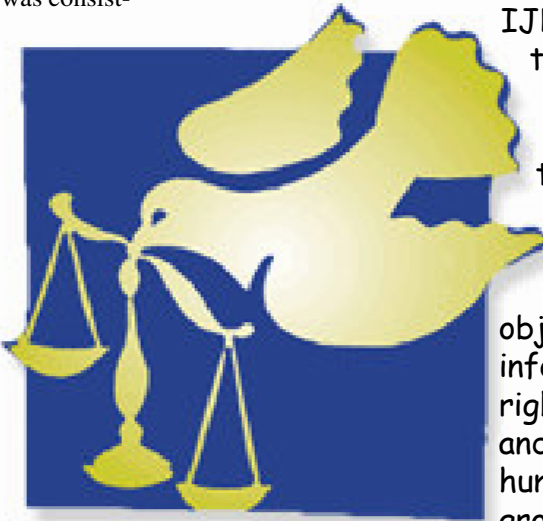
The hundreds of cases cited in the IJDH report are "only a tiny fraction of the violations committed." This is because researchers faced many obstacles, including:

"(a) many victims, or [their] relatives..., [are in] hiding...;

- (b) ...the continuing control of areas outside Port-au-Prince by rebels of the Front [Résistance pour la Libération Nationale] and former soldiers...;
- (c) many victims or their relatives decline to report violations for fear of further retaliation;
- (d) cadavers brought to the morgue and unclaimed are systematically disposed of."⁶

Despite these difficulties, the detailed report—replete with horrifying photos of mutilated bodies and piles of corpses—exposes a gruesome litany of abuses, including:

- "(a) violence to the life, security, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder, torture, mutilation, rape, as well as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...;
- (b) collective punishments against persons and their property;
- (c) pillage;
- (d) ...abduction or unacknowledged detention of individuals; and
- (e) threats or incitement to commit...the above acts;
- (f) arbitrary arrests and detentions;
- (g) violation of the right to freedom of assembly and as-



IJDH was formed in 2004 to work with the people of Haiti in their nonviolent struggle for the return and consolidation of constitutional democracy and justice, by distributing objective and accurate information on human rights conditions in Haiti and by cooperating with human rights and solidarity groups in Haiti and abroad.

sociation; and

- (h) violation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression."⁷

In terms of identifying the political affiliation of the victims, the IJDH report states that

"with the exception of four victims and for those whom it has not been possible to obtain their identity, interviewees have reported that the victims were supporters of President Aristide or Haiti's former constitutional government."⁸

The report also explains that

"Many of the cases of arbitrary arrests, illegal detention and torture, and of collective punishments against victims and their property are linked to the attempts of the victims to exercise their right to freedom of expression, most commonly while expressing their support for the upholding of democracy."⁹

The IJDH was equally clear about who was committing these crimes and pointed to the coup regime's "armed forces and other organized armed groups.... Acts

of violence have been carried out by armed gangs or other criminal groups acting with impunity and what appears to be under the cover, or with the tacit consent, of the [coup regime's] authorities.”¹⁰

On July 26, 2004, an IJDH update catalogued continuing human rights abuses. This second report was a damning indictment of “official persecution” by Haiti’s coup regime and gave numerous examples of its culpability for:

- ♦ “Illegal arrests and detention
- ♦ Illegal searches
- ♦ Persecution of the press
- ♦ Infringement of freedom of speech and assembly
- ♦ Infringement on the independence of the judiciary
- ♦ Failure to protect citizens”¹¹

The IJDH was again clear in its identification of the victims and perpetrators:

“People perceived to support Haiti’s constitutional government or Fanmi Lavalas, the political party of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, have been systematically persecuted from late February through the present. In many cases, the *de facto* government of Prime Minister Gérard Latortue is directly responsible for the persecution; in

ing and promotion.... Integrating such people into the force...is a recipe for abuse and repression.”¹²

This IJDH report concluded by saying the regime: “must immediately stop all persecution of those perceived to support Lavalas or Haiti’s constitutional government, and must start scrupulously respecting the Haitian constitution’s civil liberties protections. It must not only end abuses by its own police and judicial officials, but also bring its paramilitary allies under the rule of law.”¹³

IJDH Denounces NCHR-Haiti

Although these two IJDH reports did not specifically mention the role played by NCHR-Haiti, the reports’ author—IJDH founder and director, Brian Concannon, Jr.—has criticised NCHR-Haiti on several occasions. For instance, during an interview in August 2004, Concannon said that NCHR-Haiti is

“considered by many of the victims of persecution to be hostile to their interests, partly because NCHR has been denouncing people who were subsequently arrested and imprisoned illegally, and partly because when you go into NCHR offices there are wanted posters for people associ-

ated with the

“Lavalas government and they don’t have posters of people who’ve even been convicted of human rights violations against Lavalas supporters and are roaming free.

“If NCHR and others are going to claim that this persecution is not happening they have to [go] out and conduct an investigation. I think that a lot of the mainstream human rights organisations in Haiti, which are also—not coincidentally—supported by USAID and by other wealthy governments [like Canada], have been systematically biased in their human rights reporting, in terms of over reporting accusations against Lavalas members and underreporting or ignoring accusations of persecution of Lavalas members.”¹⁴

In an article outlining the trumped-up, legal case against Aristide’s Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, for alleged responsibility in a supposed Lavalas-government massacre at La Scierie, St. Marc, Concannon notes that—despite the lack of any evidence—“NCHR-Haiti insisted that the case be prosecuted.”

Concannon also describes NCHR-Haiti as a “ferocious critic” of Aristide’s government and an “ally” of the illegal regime. He explains that NCHR-Haiti had a close working relationship with the coup-installed Interim Government of Haiti (IGH). Concannon points out, for instance, that:

“The IGH, which had an agreement with NCHR-Haiti to prosecute anyone the organization denounced, obliged by arresting Mr. Neptune along with the former Minister of the Interior [Jocelerme Privert], a former member of Parliament [Amanus Maette] and several others.

“NCHR-Haiti received a \$100,000 grant from the Canadian government (one of the IGH’s three main supporters, along with the U.S. and France) to pursue the La Scierie case. The organization hired a lawyer and former opposition Senator to represent the victims, and kept up the pres-

Brian Concannon, Jr., the founder of IJDH and author of its 2004 human rights report on Haiti, denounced NCHR-Haiti. He specifically cited NCHR’s \$100,000 CIDA grant which it used to help the illegal coup regime to concoct a trumped-up case against Aristide’s Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, and other prominent Lavalas Party leaders.



other cases it is refusing to take steps to prevent its allies from persecuting Lavalas supporters.... There have been no attempts to arrest anyone for attacks against Lavalas supporters, including perpetrators actually convicted of crimes during the previous *de facto* regime (1991-1994).

“The Latortue government has made no effort to disarm the insurgents and other allies who are carrying and using illegal weapons. Heavily-armed paramilitary groups illegally control many areas..., marking a return to the practices of military dictatorships. The armed gangs make arrests, without warrants or other legal authority.... Some even pronounce and execute death sentences, with no trial. The police and judiciary collaborate with this illegality, by holding the arrestees. The military’s traditional allies, the quasi-military ‘Section Chiefs,’ have started to reclaim power from local elected officials....

“The government has also illegally integrated former soldiers into regular Haitian National Police units, bypassing the police force’s...procedures for recruitment, train-

sure in the press.”¹⁵

Concannon gave further details of NCHR-Haiti's, Canadian-funded legal case in an article for *The Jurist*, saying that although NCHR-Haiti

“became increasingly politicized and, in the wake of the 2004 coup d'état, it cooperated with the IGH in persecuting Lavalas activists. The persecution became so flagrant that NCHR-Haiti's former parent organization, New York-based NCHR, publicly repudiated the Haitian group and asked it to change its name. [It then] changed its name [to Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH)], but maintained its dogged pursuit of Mr. Neptune and other Lavalas members. The organization filed a suit on behalf of a group of people claiming to be victims of a massacre [at La Scierie]...with the help of a substantial grant from the Canadian government. RNDDH's legal team tenaciously opposed, in court and in the press, the prosecutor's recommendation to drop the case, and even the request for humanitarian release.”¹⁶

Quixote Center (QC)

In late March/early April 2004, the QC sent an “Emergency Haiti Observation Mission” to Haiti with 23 human rights observers, including some “Congressional aides.”¹⁷ Their report concluded that “insecurity” in Haiti was the result of numerous factors, including the:

“resurgence of military and paramilitary forces, freed criminals and human rights violators walking the streets and controlling large areas outside the capital, the integration of resurgent paramilitary and military into the Haitian National Police, weapons proliferation and armed gangs.”¹⁸

The QC report documented the “systematic campaign of terror” unleashed by the February 2004 coup and identified its main targets as

“the poor who have supported President Aristide, the *Fanmi Lavalas* party and participatory democracy.”

As for those responsible, the QC report said that the “Haitian press presently plays a key role in the persecu-

Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine has Disappeared!

By Richard Sanders

Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine has disappeared! One of Haiti's most outspoken human rights activists was last seen on August 12, 2007, and is presumed kidnapped.

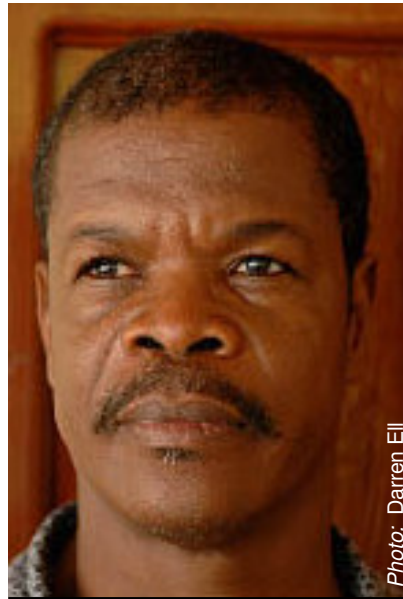
For many years, Lovinsky was “a grassroots leader, member of the Lavalas Party, and the head of Fondasyon Tran Septanm [September 30 Foundation], a Haitian human rights organization that advocates for victims of the 1991 and 2004 coups against the democratically elected governments of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.”¹

He helped create several groups in aid of Haiti's poor. For instance:

“As a young psychologist... Lovinsky helped establish Fondasyon Kore Timoun Yo (Foundation for the Support of Children)..., Foyer pour Adolescentes Mères, a center for teenage mothers and Map Viv (“I Live”), [giving] psychological and medical aid to the victims of the first coup against Aristide in 1991.”²

Following the U.S./Canada/France-backed coup in 2004, Lovinsky went into exile but returned in early 2006. Since then, he has helped the

“campaign for the return of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti, an end to the UN occupation, economic and social justice, and the freeing of all political prisoners. His work helped bring 10,000 people into



the streets of Port-au-Prince on July 15 [2007], commemorating Aristide's birthday. He has been outspoken in denouncing the continued presence of coup participants and supporters within the current government.”³

Just weeks before his disappearance, Lovinsky helped a protest to “oppose Canada's involvement in the February 29, 2004 coup d'état of elected Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, as well as Canada's continued interference in Haitian politics.”⁴

How many Canadians know that on July 20, 2007, just hours before Prime Minister Stephen Harper did his much-heralded photo op in Cité Soleil, “Forty Haitian demonstrators were

On July 15, 2007, just hours before Prime Minister Harper's well-publicized photo op in Cité Soleil, UN troops arrested forty peaceful protesters who had gathered there to expose Canada's support for the 2004 coup and the brutal regime that followed. Lovinsky spoke out on their behalf saying that the Canadian-backed UN military mission in Haiti “is not engaging in peacekeeping.... It is a mission that engages in operations of massacres, of assassinations, of destabilization.” These arrests, and Lovinsky's subsequent disappearance, received scant international media coverage.

arrested by UN soldiers.... The protest had been organized by residents of Cité Soleil in response to the visit of the Canadian Prime Minister.”⁵

Speaking of this protest, Lovinsky said “our comrades went out into the streets with placards, banners and megaphones.... At that moment... MINUSTAH [i.e., UN] soldiers began to make arrests for no reason.... What MINUSTAH is doing is not a mission of stabilization; it is not engaging in peacekeeping.... It is a mission that engages in operations of massacres, of assassinations, of destabilization...”⁶

Not surprisingly, the Canadian Embassy in Haiti, CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), have all

tion. The interim government is not only allowing this campaign to proceed, it is actively participating. According to nearly all the testimony, eye witness accounts and reports by family members of victims, U.S. Marines have also taken part in the terrorist campaign.”¹⁹

As a result of the “violations and abuses since the coup...[which] disproportionately affected the poor and supporters of Lavalas,... individuals from the slums of Port-au-Prince, secondary cities and rural areas [were] forced into hiding.”²⁰

For example, members of Haiti’s “largest human rights organization,” the Fondasyon Trant Septam (FTS)—named for the date upon which Aristide was overthrown in a coup after his first election in 1991—were forced into “hiding throughout the country” and “their leader Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, a psychologist with a long history of working with torture victims, went into exile on March 2 [2004].” (See “Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine has Disappeared!” pp.6-7)

Although FTS representatives “came out of hiding”

remained silent on Lovinsky’s disappearance. Roger Annis, a Vancouverite who worked with Lovinsky in Haiti this August, asked officials at Canada’s embassy in Haiti to issue “a clear statement...condemning the kidnapping.”⁷ They refused point blank. Annis contrasted their response with Canada’s persistent and outraged concerns prior to the Canadian-backed coup in 2004:

“Canada never ceased to complain about alleged human rights violations by [Aristide’s] government [which]...faced a total cut-off of aid and development funds from Canada, the U.S. and France in response to complaints from Haiti’s wealthy elite that it was systematically violating human rights. Canada funded a so-called human rights agency, the National Coalition of Human Rights (NCHR) that issued biased and sometimes fraudulent reports.”⁸

The website of NCHR-Haiti (now the National Network for the Defense of Human Rights) contains no references to Lovinsky’s decades of activism, let alone his recent abduction.⁹

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1. “Where is Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine?” Haiti Action Committee Alert. <www.spartacuslives.org/node/12790>
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Stuart Neatby, “UN Arrested 40 Ahead of Harper’s Haiti Visit,” *The Dominion*, August 3, 2007. <www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/1298>
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

Call for Lovinsky’s Return

Roger Annis is urging all concerned Canadians to call the Department of Foreign Affairs (toll-free at 1-800-267-8376) and to ask

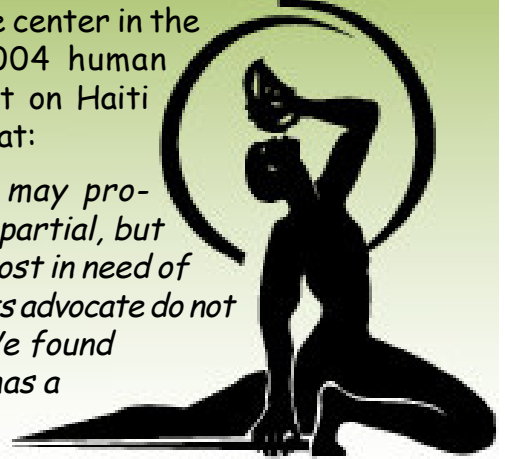
“that all necessary resources that Canada can bring to the investigation...be made available, and that Canada go on record against any form of violence or intimidation against Haitians for expressing political views.”¹⁰

He also suggests¹¹ that people should:

- **Email the International Education Division of Foreign Affairs Canada**
<www.international.gc.ca/common/contact_us-en.asp?subject=InformationFPIT&form=1>
- **Contact the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)**
Telephone: 011-509-244-0650/066
Fax: 011-509-244-9366/67
- **Fax the New York office of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:**
212-963-4879

The Quixote Center is a faith-based, social justice center in the U.S. Its 2004 human rights report on Haiti concluded that:

“the NCHR may proclaim it is impartial, but the people most in need of a human rights advocate do not believe it. We found that NCHR has a clear bias.”



to meet with the QC delegation, they were forced to “remain anonymous for their safety.” FTS members are “predominantly urban slum dwellers...victimized during the 1991 coup.” For more than a decade, they organized weekly vigils at Haiti’s National Palace and “coordinated a campaign to prevent the Haitian Army from being re-established.” They even managed to gather “150,000 names on a petition calling for a constitutional amendment to outlaw the Haitian Army.”²¹

The QC report contrasts the post-2004 coup persecution of legitimate human rights groups such as FTS, with the very different experience of “opposition and non-governmental organizations” who “advocated Aristide’s overthrow.” Following the 2004 coup, these anti-Lavalas groups were certainly not forced into hiding, nor did they face any persecution. In fact, they experienced what they described as “a greater freedom of expression.”

This dramatic difference between the security conditions faced by groups that pitted themselves either for or against Aristide’s elected government, was manifested in several ways, including the location of their meetings with the QC delegation. The QC report notes that FTS members were forced to meet “with our observation team while in hiding.” In contrast, the QC’s meetings with the following anti-Aristide groups were all done in the safety of their own offices: NCHR-Haiti, the Civil Society Initiative Group, Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA) and the National Coordination for Advocacy on Womens’ Rights (CONAP).²² Not surprisingly, these coup-friendly groups were all generously funded by CIDA. (See “NCHR-Haiti,” pp.3-32; “The G184,” pp.33; “PAPDA,” pp.44-45; “CONAP and ENFOFANM,” pp.48-49.)



Protest against the NCHR, NY City, May 21, 2004.

Photo: Dominique Esser

QC Denounces NCHR-Haiti

The QC emergency observation team visited the Port-au-Prince office of NCHR-Haiti, which it describes as “the human rights organization most widely relied upon by U.S.-based policy makers. Although NCHR claims to be an impartial organization, the [QC] team heard repeated testimony concerning their silence in cases where Lavalas supporters have been the victims. NCHR, for its own part, talked about what they called ‘systematic human rights violations’ which occurred during Aristide’s administration. They do not believe what is happening now [late March-early April 2004] can be considered systematic.”²³

For example, the QC team heard many eyewitness accounts of an “alleged massacre of as many as seventy-eight people in...a heavily-populated, poor neighborhood, Bel Air, in Port-au-Prince” which “escaped any real scrutiny by the international press.” According to “almost every individual and organization the [QC] observation mission interviewed, the deaths came at the hands of U.S. Marines.”²⁴

However, when the QC team asked NCHR-Haiti representative, Fito Espérance, if his group planned to investigate this case, his response revealed NCHR-Haiti’s propensity for blaming the victims of such attacks:

“You must understand that just before Aristide left, he and his government armed a lot of people.... Almost the entire country was armed.... [Espérance] did admit that ‘there is a rumor of an attack against the occupation forces in Bel Air. They said a lot of people [Haitians] died.’ But he then came back to blaming the Haitian victims, and continued, ‘Bel Air totally supports Aristide and there are a lot of weapons there.’”

The QC report reveals a major shortcoming of NCHR-Haiti saying “first step to ending the terror campaign is investigating the events. However, the NCHR will not investigate in Bel Air.” Why? As Espérance explained to the QC team, NCHR-Haiti is not welcome in this poverty-stricken area:

“Even though we are a human rights organization, that

area is not accessible to us, so we just hear the reports... Haiti has areas that are inaccessible to certain human rights organizations.... [T]hey...believe those human rights organizations are opponents. They believe we are their adversaries. It is a long process to explain we are neutral.”²⁵ When Espérance was asked whether other areas were also “inaccessible to the NCHR,” he “listed some of the most impoverished and highly targeted neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince.”²⁶ One member of the QC team, Tom Reeves—a retired Caribbean studies professor who had organized nine delegations to Haiti after the 1991 coup against Aristide—commented on this meeting saying: “the NCHR said they ‘lacked access’ to the pro-Lavalas shanty-towns. Of course they lacked access: they lacked any shred of credibility as a human rights monitor.”²⁷

In an article “compiled partly from observations and interviews in conjunction with” the QC’s Emergency Haiti Observation Mission, Reeves described NCHR-Haiti’s history of one-sided “human rights” work:

“During the two years leading up to this latest coup, they adamantly refused to investigate now-verified allegations of murders, arson and bombings against the government and Lavalas by former military and FRAPH [the CIA-backed death squad from the anti-Aristide coup in 1991].

“Although they were the only human rights group in the country adequately funded and having trained monitors throughout Haiti, the NCHR became completely partisan: anti-Lavalas, anti-Aristide. This is simply not proper for a group calling itself a ‘Haitian Rights’ organization. During the final month before the coup, they abandoned any pretext of impartiality, joining calls for the ouster of Aristide, without reference to the means....

“NCHR continues to claim it has always investigated human rights violations even-handedly. Yet [on] April 26 [2004], NCHR joined PAPDA, CONAP and other ‘progressive,’ anti-Aristide groups in a demonstration at the National Palace. Totally ignoring the massive wave of repression against Lavalas documented by international delegations to Haiti in late March and early April, NCHR and the other groups only demanded the immediate arrest of Aristide’s last Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune and many other Aristide officials.... [but] made no mention of crimes carried out by criminals who escaped from the penitentiary, or the well-documented atrocities carried out by members of the former Haitian army, the FRAPH and others among the former ‘rebels.’ So much for impartiality in human rights investigations.”²⁸

The official QC report concurred with Reeve’s assessment, concluding that “the NCHR may proclaim it is impartial, but the people most in need of a human rights advocate do not believe it. We found that NCHR has a clear bias.” To illustrate this “clear bias,” the QC report recounts that they met Espérance in the

“NCHR conference room, where a ‘WANTED’ poster hangs behind the conference table. The first name on the poster is Jean-Bertrand Aristide and is followed by other high-ranking members of the Fanmi Lavalas party. No supporters of Aristide or Fanmi Lavalas would feel safe or protected in the offices of the NCHR.”²⁹

National Lawyers Guild (NLG)

The NLG human rights delegation to Haiti (April 12-19, 2004), reported that Haiti's "grave" human rights situation was "especially precarious...due to the almost total lack of knowledge about, and media attention to, the human rights abuses taking place." It reported that the "general sense...of insecurity" felt by most Haitians resulted from:

- ♦ "killings
- ♦ curfews
- ♦ the lack of police or any form of working judicial system
- ♦ ...private, heavily-armed militias
- ♦ the unauthorized return of...armed soldiers of [the] Haitian Army that President Aristide had decom-missioned in 1994 for its historical oppression of Haiti's poor."³⁰

The presence, at that time, of 3,600 U.S., French and Canadian troops was said to cause "general tension in the people of the city."³¹ For the most part, they only patrolled in "the poorest of the crowded slum neighborhoods"³² and residents in these "targeted" areas questioned whether the "arrests and home searches" to which they were being subjected were in violation of Haiti's constitution.³³

The NLG also "found overwhelming evidence" that: "the victims of the threats and violence have been supporters of the elected gov-

ernment of President Aristide and the Fanmi Lavalas party, elected and appointed officials in that government or party or employees of the government....

Many are in hiding..., others have been beaten and/or killed. Many of their homes have been selectively destroyed, mostly by arson."³⁴

In a section called the "Repression of Popular Organizations," the NLG report stated that:

- ♦ "Leaders of almost every popular organization ("OP") (formed to work with the elected [Lavalas] government to address basic community needs) have been threatened or killed.
- ♦ Many grassroots leaders have had their homes destroyed.... The threats have been carried out by former militaries and FRAPH members, as well as other supporters of the opposition.
- ♦ Former militaries and supporters of the political opposition to the elected government continue to visit the homes of OP leaders that have not been burned to keep them from coming home, and to intimidate neighbors.
- ♦ Many OP leaders reported that government funding and other support to the OPs has been summarily cut off. This includes the closing of literacy programs, food and shelter programs and orphanages."³⁵



NLG Denounces NCHR-Haiti

In dramatic contrast to the dangerous situation faced by IOPs, the NLG research team described their meeting with NCHR-Haiti officials in Port-au-Prince. Like the QC team before it, NLG investigators noted the NCHR's "WANTED" poster:

"NCHR took the [NLG] delegation into a large meeting room where the wall was adorned with a large 'wanted' poster featuring Aristide and his cabinet.... It named Aristide a 'dictator' guilty of human rights abuses [and included] a long list of other charges [and] calls for the arrest and imprisonment of Aristide and his associates."

In response to this blatant example of the NCHR's bias, the NLG delegation:

"suggested that NCHR's neutrality and inclusiveness might be better expressed with additional posters condemning, for example, FRAPH, Jodel Chamblain, Jean 'Tatoune' Baptiste,... [i.e., death-squad leaders from the 1991 coup who made a comeback during the 2004 coup] The [NCHR] Director and the staff...laughed at the suggestion of adding other wanted posters to the office."

The NLG's report gave several other examples of the NCHR's anti-Lavalas bias:

- ♦ "[M]any of the newsletters, 'open letters' and advisor-

ies available in the NCHR waiting room refer to Aristide as a 'dictator' [but] none of them concern abuses against supporters of the elected government or Lavalas.

♦ NCHR is a well-funded and equipped 'human rights' agency that purports to take all cases, regardless of political affiliation, but [its

Formed in 1937, the NLG is America's oldest integrated, national bar association. Its human rights delegation to Haiti in 2004 made this clear statement:

"We condemn the National Coalition for Haitian Rights in Haiti for not maintaining its impartiality as a human rights organization."

representatives] could not name a single case in which a Lavalas supporter was a victim.

- ♦ NCHR was asked if they would investigate the 1000 bodies dumped and buried by the morgue during the last few weeks.... The director and his staff denied knowing about these events, laughed, and said none of it was true.
- ♦ NCHR was asked if it would investigate the [40 to 60] dumped bodies at Piste D'Aviation [on March 22, 2004]. The director and his staff laughed and denied it was true. The [NLG] delegation showed NCHR the photos we had taken of the ashes and fresh human skeletons. In response, the NCHR director told us that the General Hospital routinely dumps bodies at the Piste D'Aviation."³⁶

Later in April 2004, the NLG sent another delegation to Haiti. One of the report's eight "Unanimous Statements and Recommendations," was an unequivocal condemnation of the NCHR-Haiti. It stated: "We condemn the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) in Haiti for not maintaining its impartiality as a human rights organization."³⁷

Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA)

EPICA's delegation to Haiti (April 18-24, 2004), composed of "a diverse group of scholars, clergy, activists, congress people, economists and researchers,"³⁸ met with "a wide range of individuals and organizations" including "trade unionists, international lawyers, Lavalas Party officials, the U.S. embassy, opposition parties, paramilitary leaders like Guy Philippe, and many civilians in hiding."³⁹

Upon their return, the delegation issued an "Urgent Action Alert" asking supporters to:

"denounce the vast number of human rights violations being systematically carried out against Aristide supporters and unionists. Under an illegal occupation and the existence of an illegitimate government, a grave situation of human rights abuses continues. These include massacres, disappearances, summary executions, beatings, mass illegal arrests and political repression."⁴⁰

EPICA said that "of particular concern" were:

"many accounts of Aristide supporters and unionists who have been disappeared, as well as the great number of people forced into hiding. Since February 29, 2004, these people have had to flee their homes.... Many had already been victims of political rape and violence perpetrated under the previous coup period of the early 1990s...."

"The economic elite, in collusion with the Haitian media, are orchestrating a climate of vigilante justice. The U.S.-led multinational force itself has been implicated in at least two massacres in civilian neighborhoods, and we have heard almost unanimously that Haitians feel betrayed yet again by the international community."⁴¹



not a systematic repression on the part of authorities[nor] a deliberate attempt to chase away Lavalas."⁴⁴

Such denials by NCHR-Haiti leadership prompted EPICA to ask their supporters to take this "urgent action": "Call Amnesty International...and Human Rights Watch...to demand that their counterparts in Haiti, especially the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) investigate and denounce human rights abuses perpetuated against Lavalas supporters."⁴⁵

An article criticising "Amnesty International" for its heavy reliance on NCHR-Haiti's biased reports, refers to EPICA's "urgent action" appeal, saying:

"It was a good suggestion because Pierre Espérance, NCHR's director, had boasted in 2002 that:

'I am a primary source of information for international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Most recently, I was invited to address the U.S. State Department in a roundtable forum to discuss the human rights situation in Haiti.'

His statement does not seem to have been much of an exaggeration. During the first four months after the coup, Amnesty failed to call attention to the evidence that a massive assault on Lavalas was well underway."⁴⁶

Rev. Angela Boatright, an EPICA team member, said NCHR-Haiti told them that Lavalas faced no "systematic repression on the part of [coup] authorities." Such blatant denials of reality prompted EPICA's "urgent action" appeal asking supporters to: "Call Amnesty International...and Human Rights Watch...to demand that their counterparts in Haiti, especially the NCHR, investigate and denounce human rights abuses perpetuated against Lavalas supporters."

EPICA Denounces NCHR-Haiti

An EPICA media release in April 2004 had this to say about CIDA's favourite human rights group in Haiti:

"[T]he National Coalition for Haitian Rights, the leading human rights agency used in Washington policy circles, has refused to answer questions about terror campaigns being waged against civilians and Lavalas supporters."⁴²

A report on the EPICA delegation by team member Reverend Angela Boatright—who represented the U.S. Fellowship of Reconciliation—describes their meeting with NCHR-Haiti executive director Pierre Espérance. She quoted him as saying: "Lavalas people are being arrested for the crimes they committed. Our position is that they deserve to be arrested because they have committed crimes."⁴³

She recounted that Espérance told them "If Lavalas people are in hiding" it was only because "many" had "participated in crimes or even kidnapping. Many of those in hiding have problems with the judicial system. There is

Haiti Accompaniment Project (HAP)

HAP's first human rights delegation to Haiti after the coup (June 29-July 9, 2004):

"coincided with a new wave of repression by the *de facto* Haitian authorities against supporters of the elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the Fanmi Lavalas Party.... The level of tension in Port-au-Prince was heightened by two large fires... The fires, apparently arsons, were of unknown origin, but Haitian authorities quickly claimed they were set by the Lavalas sector."⁴⁷

HAP said that based on their "discussions with human rights workers," there was "widespread agreement" that "repercussions from this coup [2004] are even worse than what took place after the brutal 1991-1994 coup.... In both instances military force, backed by Haitian elites, overthrew the democratically elected government. In both cases, there were large-scale, politically-motivated murders.... In both cases, paramilitary groups allied with the

de facto authorities...exercised police, judicial and administrative powers, and brutally repressed dissent. In both periods, people associated with the overthrown government lost jobs, had their homes burned and were forced to leave.... In both periods, the *de facto* government routinely arrested democracy activists...without respect for their legal rights.”⁴⁸

HAP’s analysis of the two coups also compared the role of human rights groups, the media and foreign bodies: “In 1991-1994, independent human rights groups continued to operate within Haiti and had some access to human rights groups around the world. Independent media, at times, was able to project the voice of victims of military rule. International organizations like the UN and OAS invoked their charter mechanisms in support of democracy, insisted on the legitimacy of Haiti’s elected government and isolated the *de facto* authorities.

“In the current period [2004], even though the overwhelming majority of Haiti’s electorate voted for President Aristide and Lavalas representatives, their voice has been silenced. The Haitian media, mostly controlled by the Haitian elite, has been a consistent voice of the opponents of Aristide. Most...radio stations...are members of the Association of National Media of Haiti, which is...a member of the Group of 184, which helped orchestrate the coup d’etat. [T]hese stations are not merely biased in their news coverage...they publicly committed themselves to the overthrow of Haiti’s democratic government.

“The U.S. and France have dissuaded the UN and the OAS from even investigating the coup, despite requests from half of the OAS membership and a third of the UN. The international media has largely ignored the massive human rights violations since the coup.

“The U.S., [Canada] and France have been able to construct a multilateral occupation of Haiti under the aegis of the UN.... While this does nothing to change the illegality of the occupation, it gives it an aura of legitimacy.... [T]he UN Military Command works in close coordination with the Haitian National Police, which has already integrated many former military into their ranks. While sending thousands of troops to Haiti, the UN has so far sent only one human rights officer to Haiti.”⁴⁹

The HAP team also received

“numerous reports that the UN military command... coordinates its activities with Guy Philippe, the rebel leader...responsible for major human rights violations—including assassinations—in the period preceding the coup.”⁵⁰

The kidnapping and forced exile of President Aristide, and the imprisonment of his government’s top elected officials, dramatically show that the foreign-backed coup was a blow to democracy. However, this was only the beginning. The HAP report states that “thousands of democratically elected officials have been effectively removed from office.” To this massive assault on democracy must also be added the fact that “approximately 10,000 state employees”—hired by the Lavalas government—were “fired from their jobs.”⁵¹

The coup regime’s whole-scale demolition of the Lavalas government, its elected officials and bureaucracy, created immediate economic hardships for tens of thousands

of individuals illegally removed from their jobs. However, this strike against democracy also devastated the lives of those dependent upon the Lavalas government’s many social programs. Most severely affected were Haiti’s already-destitute majority. The HAP team’s report cited “clear evidence of an economic campaign against the poor” being waged by Latortue’s coup-appointed dictatorship:

- ♦ “Large land owners accompanied by armed paramilitaries have seized land...given to peasant families...[by Lavalas] Land Reform projects....
- ♦ Residents of...a [Lavalas-government] public housing project, have been evicted.... The UN seized [a new four-story apartment complex] to house its personnel, and the residents were put out on the street....
- ♦ A crackdown on labor unions and peasant associations....
- ♦ The Latortue government...[gave] a tax holiday...to large businesses who suffered losses between December 2003 and March 2004. No state support was offered to the thousands of poor people who have lost their homes or livelihoods due to the coup d’etat....
- ♦ The government...cancelled subsidies for school children and schoolbooks and...ended funding for literacy programs... [C]hildren have been forced out of school because of family affiliation with Lavalas.”⁵²

HAP Denounces NCHR-Haiti

HAP’s report also examined the significant role played by human rights groups that were tied to the dictatorships imposed by the anti-Aristide coups of 1991 and 2004: “[F]ollowing both coups, many independent human rights workers were threatened and forced underground, while some human rights groups placed their reputations at the service of the dictatorship. In 1991, Jean-Jacques Honorat of the human rights group CHANDEL, became the Cedras military regime’s *de facto* Prime Minister. In 2004, groups like the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR)...and CARLI helped develop support for the coup with exaggerated reports of human rights violations by supporters of the elected government. At the same time, they downplayed or denied the much more massive violations of the *de facto* regime and its paramilitary allies. Both groups continue to ‘denounce’ supporters of the elected government that they claim were involved in human rights violations. Although these denunciations are not accompanied by proof, they are often accompanied by illegal arrest, incarceration and sometimes the disappearance of the accused. Both NCHR and CARLI are supported by USAID [and CIDA].... They are not independent human rights groups.”

The HAP delegation also met with legitimate human rights groups that had *not* “placed their reputations at the service of the dictatorship.” For instance, the HAP team met with members of Fondasyon Trant Septam (FTS), the victims advocacy group previously discussed in the Quixote Center’s report. According to HAP, FTS representatives:

“were deeply dismayed that the outside world still looked upon NCHR as a credible independent voice. They told us that NCHR was now working hand-in-hand with the post-coup Minister of Justice [Bernard Gousse] in carry-

ing out illegal arrests and detentions. In several cases, including that of Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, NCHR staff have made accusations without evidence that have led to arrests of Lavalas officials.”⁵³

Like the other, independent human rights reports cited above, HAP clearly described the wave of anti-Lavalas repression sparked by Haiti’s 2004 coup, and the failure of NCHR-Haiti to report this violence:

“Fanmi Lavalas has experienced the brunt of repression since the coup. Many leaders have left the country or are in internal exile. Many Lavalas members and supporters have had their homes burned, have lost jobs and have been separated from their families. Activists from around the country face continual threats from police, the former military and political opponents. The Justice Ministry has ordered personal and organizational bank accounts to be frozen, rumors continually circulate about impending trials for corruption and many former officials have been barred from leaving the country, in violation of the consti-



tution. The National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR), which has positioned itself among international media as the voice of human rights in Haiti, has refused to condemn this widespread repression against Lavalas.”⁵⁴

The HAP report then details two cases in which high-profile Lavalas figures were imprisoned based on totally concocted charges. In both cases (Annette Auguste and Yvon Neptune), NCHR-Haiti not only “refused to condemn” the abuse of these political prisoners, it played a “pivotal role” in their arrest and prolonged unlawful imprisonment.

HAP reported that NCHR-Haiti “helped develop support for the coup with exaggerated reports of human rights violations by supporters of the elected government [and then]...downplayed or denied the much more massive violations of the *de facto* regime and its paramilitary allies.”

Stop Canada’s Persecution of former-Lavalas MP, Jean Candio

By Richard Sanders

Last year, Jean Candio, a former Haitian MP, received an odd Christmas present from the Canadian government—he spent two weeks in a Windsor-Ontario jail. The two main reasons he spent Christmas behind bars may seem surprising.

First of all, the government cited an Amnesty International document that reported unsubstantiated allegations by a CIDA-funded group called the National Coalition for Haitian Rights–Haiti (NCHR-Haiti). This “thoroughly discredited and partisan Haitian human rights group”¹ (see pp.3-32) had made numerous other totally-unfounded claims leading to the persecution of prominent politicians from President Aristide’s Lavalas Party. In Candio’s case, they accused him of disrupting a church meeting in Pliche, Haiti, on November 2000.²

When these grounds evaporated, Canadian officials then claimed that Candio was a “senior official” in a government that “engages or has engaged in terrorism, systematic or gross human rights violations, or genocide.”³ And, says Enver Villamizar, a Windsor activist helping Candio’s case:

“the immigration judge actually extended his prison time for one week stating that his association [with Aristide’s government] was proof enough to hold him.”⁴

As for the first excuse, Candio

“can easily refute the allegations.... [and] notwithstanding wild allegations ...made on anti-Lavalas websites,”⁵ he has signed affidavits from witnesses testifying that he was not even in Pliche on the date of the incident. He also has a “police clearance showing that no case has been brought against him at any level in Haiti.”⁶

It is also worth noting that although Amnesty “published NCHR’s allegations against Mr. Candio,” it “never mentioned later investigations that exonerated him.”⁷

The second basis for Candio’s arrest—Canada’s labelling of Haiti’s government as terrorist—demonstrates extreme prejudice against “the massively popular movement that has dominated Haitian elections since 1990.”⁸

Candio was elected in 2000 with 91% of the vote. In the previous Lavalas government, he had been appointed a vice-delegate “responsible for education and community programs.”⁹ Both Aristide administrations were ousted in violent coups and many Lavalas officials—including Candio—fearing for their lives, went into exile.

Considering Canada’s key role in the 2004 coup, it is not surprising that our government would see Lavalas as a terrorist organization. In March 2004, just weeks after the coup, Canada’s Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade met with top representatives of several CIDA-funded groups that whole-heartedly

supported the Canadian-backed regime change in Haiti. Among them was Catherine Duhamel, Director of the International Center for Legal Resources (ICLR). In the midst of Haiti’s vicious, anti-Lavalas crackdown—when thousands were being murdered, jailed, raped or exiled by the Canadian-backed dictatorship—Duhamel told MPs that because of this “absolutely urgent” situation, “Canada should immediately take action to prevent alleged Haitian offenders from entering the country.” She then explained exactly who the “offenders” were, saying Canada

“should designate the Aristide regime, just as those of Duvalier and Cedras were, as the latter are already designated under our Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. That would mean that members of the Aristide regime would be ineligible for entry to Canada.”¹⁰

And this is exactly what the Canadian government did, although it really didn’t need any coaching from the CIDA-funded ICLR.¹¹

Joe Emersberger, a Windsor-based activist with the Canada Haiti Action Network (CHAN), summed up the government’s hypocrisy saying, in December 2006, that if it criminalizes “Candio’s association with Lavalas,” the Canadian government will have “criminalized Haiti’s poor majority.... It is Lavalas opponents—not the besieged Lavalas governments—who have committed gross and sys-

Annette Auguste (So Anne)

On May 10, twenty heavily armed U.S. Marines used explosives to blast their way into the home of this 60-year-old grandmother, a “well-known singer and Lavalas activist”:

“The Marines did not have a warrant, as the Constitution requires, and the operation was implemented in the middle of the night, which is also illegal. During the arrest, eleven other Haitians, including children, were hooded and threatened. After questioning Auguste and all her family members, the Marines turned her over to the Haitian police.

“Ms. Auguste has faced a bewildering series of shifting charges, none of them legally documented. First, she was accused of planning attacks against U.S. Marines. Shortly after her arrest, NCHR made public statements indicating that they had evidence that Auguste was involved in the events of December 5, 2003.... On May 13 [2004], Auguste was taken before a judge who stated that there was no evidence for those charges. Still the

temic human rights abuses; yet Mr. Candio sits in jail...not the dictator Gérard Latortue, nor his Canadian allies—Paul Martin and Pierre Pettigrew. Those who have trampled on the rights of the poor—like Gérard Latortue—are welcomed as statesmen by the Canadian government.”¹²

In January 2007, Candio’s lawyer, Paul Copeland, reported that the Canadian government had finally dropped its allegations that his client “was a member of a terrorist group.”¹³

Despite ill treatment by Canadian authorities, he and his family are still trying to gain refugee status here. They have good reason to believe it would be even worse for them in Haiti, or the U.S. In March 2004, Candio’s house “was burned to the ground,”¹⁴ killing his sister and her child.¹⁵ Candio’s cousin was also killed.¹⁶ The “death squads that murdered” them “were headed by people who are currently mayors and other low level officials in Haiti who maintain their posts as a result of the *de facto* administration set up after the coup.”¹⁷

After fleeing to the U.S., Candio was detained there in March and April of 2006. The U.S. government then allowed him to “voluntarily leave the U.S. to go to Canada, where the plan apparently was to have Canadian border officials immediately deport him back to Haiti.”¹⁸ Candio had already “requested asylum in Canada well before arriving [and] the Government of Canada invited him to come for an appointment to receive his claim.”¹⁹ However, upon

arrival at the border on December 13, 2006, Candio was subjected to “interrogation...by an individual claiming to be an interpreter, but who is widely believed to have been a U.S. security agent.”²⁰ Thanks to pressure from CHAN activists, Candio was not deported and was freed from jail on December 28.

But the Canadian government is still thwarting his case. Several other Haitian refugee claimants—who arrived here after Candio—“have already had their hearings and been granted convention refugee status.”²¹ Meanwhile, Candio’s lawyer has “never had a response from the Refugee Board” to let-

Photo: Colin O'Connor



prosecutor...refused to sign her release.”²²

So Anne was not released until in mid-August 2006, when—after 826 days in illegal custody—a judge stated that there was no evidence against her. In a statement made during her imprisonment, So Anne explained that the

“Government prosecutor, Daniel Audain, started criminal prosecution against me because the organization NCHR (National Coalition for Haitian Rights) stated that I was among the people who on December 5, 2003, beat up the rector of the State University.”²⁶

ters he sent in April and June, requesting an “expedited hearing.”²²

CHAN is urging Canadians to call for an end to Candio’s legal limbo. Please ask the IRB to respond positively to Candio’s requests for an immediate refugee hearing:

- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada <info@irb-cisr.gc.ca>

Please CC your email to:

- Paul Copeland (Candio’s lawyer) <paulcope@interlog.com>
- Joe Emersberger (Haiti Solidarity Windsor) <jemersberger@aol.com>

For more information, contact Joe Emersberger <jemersberger@aol.com>

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Prime Minister Yvon Neptune

Aristide's Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, was imprisoned by the coup government after being falsely accused by NCHR-Haiti of "masterminding" a "massacre." (See "Faking Genocide in Haiti, pp.23-28.) HAP reported that when they visited him on July 8, 2004, he "had not yet seen a judge... despite the Constitutional requirement" that this be done "within 48 hours." HAP concluded that there was "no legal justification for his detention" and referred to the "pivotal" role played by NCHR-Haiti in the phony case against him:

"As in the case of [So Anne] Annette Auguste, NCHR appears to have played a pivotal role in the arrest of the



Neptune

Prime Minister. NCHR was the first to claim that 50 people were killed in a 'massacre' in St. Marc in February. At that time journalists and human rights workers went to St. Marc and found that, in fact, five or six people had died...most likely due to a clash between two rival groups, Bale Wouze and Ramicos. They did not find the remains of 50 people. Pierre Espérance, the NCHR director in Haiti, publicly stated that the bodies, including the bones, had

been eaten by dogs. He has since backtracked on this statement, now claiming that the bodies are hidden.

"The *Agence Haïtienne de Presse* reported [July 8, 2004] that a source close to the *de facto* government had privately expressed frustration with NCHR. According to this source, the *de facto* government blames NCHR for embarrassing the government by pushing for Neptune's arrest and then being unable to substantiate the charges."⁵⁷

However, the coup regime's supposed embarrassment by NCHR-Haiti was never serious enough for it to release Neptune, let alone the 1000 other political prisoners experiencing the inhumanity of Haitian jails which a U.S. Court likened to a "scene reminiscent of a slave ship."⁵⁸

A second HAP delegation to Haiti (July 30-August 16, 2004) uncovered evidence that NCHR-Haiti actively engaged in the interrogation, coercion and bribery of political prisoners. In the case of Roland Dauphin, this effort seemed aimed at securing false testimony against Neptune and others arrested for the alleged "massacre" at La Scierie. These serious "allegations of inappropriate and illegal behavior by [a] human rights organization,"⁵⁹ namely NCHR-Haiti, were published in the second HAP-delegation report.

This report, which states that "NCHR played a role in the interrogation of political prisoners," includes testimony from several political prisoners who—after being subjected to horrific abuse amounting to torture, including beatings and death threats—were "visited by Marie Yolene Gilles of NCHR...on the pretext of protecting their human rights."⁶⁰ All three witnesses recounted how this NCHR-Haiti official helped in their brutal interrogation.

Rospide Petion

Petion, the Lavalas government's head of Airport Security, went into hiding after the coup, but was captured on March 14, 2004, by about 15 members of Haiti's equivalent of a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team. They: "forced him to the ground, beat him,...put a black sack over his head and demanded \$50,000... At the police station, [*de facto* police chief Leon] Charles interrogated Petion, saying he would be given a chance if he informed authorities where Lavalas members were hiding. Petion replied that he didn't know, whereupon Charles threatened him with prison. Petion protested that he was arrested without a warrant, to which Charles scoffed, 'Aristide is gone now.'.... [H]e was told to speak with a representative of NCHR and the media.... Marie Yolene Gilles, NCHR, then took over the interrogation, saying, 'We know you crashed the radio tower.'⁶¹

Petion was later accused of participating in attacks against anti-Aristide protesters that allegedly occurred on December 5, 2003, at Haiti's State University. However, after spending nine months in prison, Petion finally received a "provisional release" in December 2004. All charges against him were dropped in April 2006, when a judge ruled that there was no evidence of any kind linking Petion to that event.⁶²



Photo: Darren Ell

Petion

Roland Dauphin

Roland Dauphin, a St. Marc customs worker, was taken to a police jail on March 1, 2004, after being kidnapped by "paramilitary troops" who accused him of "gang affiliation." At the police station, Dauphin saw 150 to 200 armed rebels, including Guy Philippe,⁶³ the leader of the uprising that had provided the pretext for the 2004 coup.

During the next four days, Dauphin was "twice taken from his cell at night for interrogation.... Front members wearing masks...put a hood over his head, cuffed him and drove him around.... He thought they would kill him."

Dauphin faced the torture of mock execution when "he was ordered to get out and lay on the ground. Shots were fired at the ground around his body." His father wasn't so lucky. "While imprisoned, paramilitary forces burned down [Dauphin's] house. His father was inside and died."

Dauphin told HAP's team that Marie Yolene Gilles of NCHR-Haiti "sought him out at the...police station, offering a deal for information." He said she "interrogated" him, and claimed "that they knew he was a member of Balewouze, a pro-Lavalas popular organization." Dauphin said "Gilles offered him an American visa if he would testify that Neptune and Privert were responsible for the alleged massacre at La Scierie."

Dauphin described how Gilles of NCHR-Haiti:

“urged him to implicate the Prime Minister [Neptune] and Minister of the Interior [Privert] in an alleged massacre of Aristide opponents in St. Marc, promising him money and safe haven in the U.S. When he balked,...Gilles made a phone call to show she had the authority to deliver the deal.... Gilles spoke English during the telephone call and identified the other party as a U.S. Embassy official.... The NCHR spokeswoman...then indicated authorities were prepared to release him immediately and secure his safety.”⁶⁴

When Dauphin refused to take the NCHR-Haiti bribe, Gilles “left her business card in case he ‘changed his mind.’” Later, Dauphin was accused of involvement in the St. Marc incident that NCHR-Haiti inflated into a “genocide.” As of July 20, 2007, Dauphin was still being held in prison.⁶⁵



Amanus Maette

Amanus Maette, was the Lavalas Party member of parliament for St. Marc, where NCHR-Haiti claimed a genocidal “massacre” had taken place. Maette told HAP that he was taken from his house by

“masked men wearing black uniforms. They cuffed his hands, chained his legs and put a bag over his head. They ...threatened to kill him unless he gave up the names of Lavalas members.... Four hours after his initial arrest,...he was re-cuffed, re-chained, [and] again hooded. Security forces again threatened to kill him for not talking.”⁶⁶

Details of NCHR’s direct involvement in Maette’s arrest are detailed in a letter to the coup regime’s Minister of Justice and Public Safety from Maette’s lawyer, Mario Joseph, and the leaders of five legitimate human rights groups, including Lovinsky Pierre Antoine and Ronald St. Jean:

“It was on the basis of a mere press release dated March 2, 2004, by the National Coalition for Human Rights..., that the former parliamentarian Amanus Maette was arrested on March 19, 2004 and then interrogated...by one of the executives of NCHR, Marie Yolène Gilles.”⁶⁷

Maette said that “Gilles offered him a...bribe [and] pledged to secure his release, provided he would ‘name names.’”⁶⁸

Although Maette would not “name names,” Gilles did not hesitate. She “went on elite-owned radio to name wanted Lavalas ‘bandits,’ contributing to a climate of anti-Lavalas terror.”⁶⁹ (See “CARLI,” pp.46-47.) Gilles was highly-regarded by CIDA-funded “NGOs” in Canada that twice flew her to Ottawa and Montreal for media conferences,⁷⁰ to lobby politicians and influence “civil society” in this country.

As with so many other Lavalas-linked political prisoners, Maette’s case also flaunted Haiti’s constitution because he had to wait many months to have his first appearance before a judge. (The Haitian constitution requires this to occur within 48 hours.) Maette was not released until April 24, 2007, more than 37 months after his illegal arrest.⁷¹

Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR)

The CSHR conducted a human rights investigation in Haiti between November 11 and 21, 2004. It met with “businessmen, grassroots leaders, gang members, victims of human rights violations, lawyers, human rights groups, police, officials from the UN, Haitian and U.S. governments, and conducted observations in poor neighborhoods, police stations, prisons, hospitals and...morgue.”⁷²

The CSHR report, written by immigration attorney Thomas Griffin, gave a chillingly eloquent account of the human rights catastrophe then underway in Haiti:

“After ten months under an interim government backed by the U.S., Canada and France, and buttressed by a UN force, Haiti’s people churn inside a hurricane of violence.... Nightmarish fear accompanies Haiti’s poorest in their struggle to survive in destitution. Gangs, police, irregular soldiers and even UN peacekeepers bring fear. There has been no investment in dialogue to end the violence.

“Haiti’s security and justice institutions fuel the cycle of violence. Summary executions are a police tactic, and even well-meaning officers treat poor neighborhoods seeking a democratic voice, as enemy territory where they must kill or be killed. Haiti’s brutal and disbanded army has returned to join the fray. Suspected dissidents fill the prisons, their constitutional rights ignored. As voices for non-violent change are silenced by arrest, assassination or fear, violent defense becomes a credible option. Mounting evidence suggests that members of Haiti’s elite, including political powerbroker Andy Apaid, pay gangs to kill Lavalas supporters and finance the illegal army.

“UN police and soldiers, unable to speak the language of most Haitians [i.e., Creole, not French], are overwhelmed by the firestorm. Unable to communicate with the police, they resort to heavy-handed incursions into the poorest neighborhoods that force intermittent peace at the expense of innocent residents....

“U.S. [and Canadian] officials blame the crisis on armed gangs in poor neighborhoods, not official abuses and atrocities, nor the unconstitutional ouster of the elected president. Their support for the interim government is not surprising, as top officials, including the Minister of Justice, worked for U.S. government projects that undermined their elected predecessors. Coupled with U.S. [and Canadian] government’s development-assistance embargo from 2000 to 2004, the projects suggest a disturbing pattern....

“Haitians, especially those living in poor neighborhoods, now struggle against inhuman horror.”⁷³

CSHR Denounces NCHR-Haiti

The CSHR report also exposed disturbing revelations about NCHR-Haiti’s extremely partisan approach to human rights as well as its cosy ties to the U.S. government and to Haiti’s ruthlessly violent coup regime.

The CSHR delegation interviewed U.S. Embassy officials who composed their State Department’s influential human rights reports on Haiti. These officials “admitted that they do not investigate human rights conditions first hand,

Quiz:

Name three people on the Canadian government's payroll who claimed in 2004 that there were "no political prisoners in Haiti."

☒ **Pierre Espérance**
(Exec. Dir., NCHR-Haiti)

☒ **Philip Vixamar**
(then-Deputy Minister of Justice, Haiti)

☒ **Paul Martin**
(then-Prime Minister of Canada)

and do not visit victims or detainees. They stated that they depend on sources such as NCHR, CARLI [and] the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission [JILAP]."⁷⁴ (The latter two CIDA-funded groups belonged to the elitist Group of 184, see p.39.)

These U.S. embassy officials also "conceded that the human rights situation" in Haiti was "extremely grave," but—like the NCHR, and other CIDA-funded groups—they laid the blame for this on "armed gangs" of Lavalas supporters in impoverished neighbourhoods and on the fact that "police are not at full strength" to root out and destroy those pro-Aristide gangs. Although they also "acknowledged" that former soldiers of Haiti's dismantled military were "acting as an armed force and are 'particularly troublesome' outside of Port-au-Prince," they did not see their attacks against Aristide supporters as a significant human rights problem. Instead, they "repeatedly emphasized that the major problem was the 'armed gangs' in [the urban 'slum' of] Cité Soleil, [and] blamed Aristide for arming them."⁷⁵

NCHR's entanglement in the day-to-day operations of the coup regime's "Ministry of Justice" was discussed in a CSHR interview with CIDA-employee Philip Vixamar. As Haiti's Deputy Minister of Justice, Vixamar was "confident" in the regime's "exclusive reliance" upon NCHR-Haiti for two crucial, human rights functions. (See "CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of 'Justice,'" pp.29-31.)

The first had to do with "arrests, detention and due process." When the CSHR team asked Vixamar about "the current rash of warrantless arrests, and reports that hundreds of prisoners have not appeared before a judge," the CIDA-paid, Haitian official replied that "all prisoners in Haiti are seeing magistrates."⁷⁶ And, although even the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission estimated that there were then "over 700 political prisoners in the capital alone,"⁷⁷ Vixamar "denied that there are any political prisoners in Haiti."⁷⁸

Two others who publicly bucked Haiti's brutal reality with similarly vehement denials were Pierre Espérance, the head of NCHR-Haiti, and Canada's Prime Minister, Paul Martin. Espérance told journalist Anthony Fenton: "I can tell you right now that there are no political prisoners in Haiti."⁷⁹ Martin echoed this lie when he assured the unquestioning media during his mid-November 2004 jaunt to Haiti, that: "There are no political prisoners in Haiti."⁸⁰

CIDA's Vixamar also told the CSHR team that Haiti's "Ministry of Justice is fully confident in its exclusive reliance on human rights group NCHR...to alert it when the Police or the Courts commit human rights abuses."⁸¹ Although such "exclusive reliance" would not be reassuring to anyone with the faintest knowledge of NCHR-Haiti's track record, it provided sufficient cover for CIDA's purposes.

The dictatorship's, CIDA-funded "Ministry of Justice" also relied solely on NCHR-Haiti for vetting the "integration of former soldiers into the [Haitian National Police] HNP." Assessing the hidden histories of former soldiers was a serious task. Many members of Haiti's dissolved mili-

tary had flagrantly abused human rights during and after the two anti-Aristide coups (1991 and 2004).

Vixamar, however, was unconcerned with the grave potential for continued violence that was bound to result from the recruitment of former soldiers into the police. He "confirmed that 200 soldiers from the disbanded army had been officially integrated into the Haitian National Police since Aristide's ouster, taking posts throughout the country.... (former soldiers have taken the highest HNP command positions throughout Haiti). 'Many more,' he said, 'are currently training [under RCMP direction] at the Haitian Police Academy.'"

Vixamar then went on to state that he was "confident that the former soldiers integrated into the HNP are not among those known to have committed human rights and criminal violations while in the Haitian Army, explaining that 'all former militaries are fully vetted by a human rights group' before being allowed into the HNP. When asked which organization conducts the 'vetting,' Vixamar replied 'NCHR.'"⁸²

Conclusion

The reports of six independent, U.S. human rights organizations that sent investigative teams to Haiti soon after the February 2004 coup, were unanimous in all key aspects of their findings. Each delegation documented overwhelming evidence showing that the members and supporters of Aristide's elected government and his popular Lavalas party were the primary targets of abuse during and after the coup.

These six organizations were also in agreement that the newly installed, coup regime was directly or indirectly responsible for the broad range of severe abuses and systematic acts of repression being experienced by Lavalas. The police, courts and prisons of the coup regime's so-called "Justice" ministry were blamed for most of these human rights violations. Each report also presented evidence indicating that foreign troops—in Haiti under a UN mandate to protect the coup regime—were also directly or indirectly responsible for serious human rights abuses and were seen by most Haitians as a threat to public security.

The authors of the six independent reports all critiqued NCHR-Haiti for having a fiercely one-sided bias.



Windsor, March 19, 2004

They all condemned it for refusing to even consider investigating the widespread human rights assaults that were being waged against pro-democracy Lavalas supporters who were suffering the bulk of Haiti's post-coup violence.

NCHR-Haiti was denounced not only for covering up these rampant human rights abuses, but also for actually encouraging Haiti's climate of anti-Aristide hysteria. NCHR-Haiti did this by building a close working relationship with the coup regime and then using unfounded accusations to help the *de facto* authorities to target Lavalas officials and supporters. The coup regime used NCHR-Haiti's baseless allegations to illegally apprehend and detain many people who were later found to be completely innocent.

Perhaps most damning was that several political prisoners who had been tortured, described how an NCHR-Haiti staff person actually participated in their interrogations. This official, Marie Yolene Gilles, tried to intimidate and bribe sev-



Marie Yolene Gilles, one of NCHR-Haiti's senior staff, helped interrogate political prisoners after they had been beaten and threatened with execution by masked death-squad members. She then offered them bribes if they would testify against prominent Lavalas politicians. Twice during the coup period, CIDA-funded "NGOs" flew Gilles to Canada where she denied that the Canadian-funded, dictatorship was repressing Lavalas. Instead, she blamed all of Haiti's violence on pro-Aristide "bandits."

eral abused prisoners into either "naming names," disclosing the hiding places of Lavalas activists or giving testimony against high-profile, elected cabinet ministers from Aristide's government who were also being held illegally as a result of unsubstantiated allegations made by NCHR-Haiti.

It is appalling that despite NCHR-Haiti's abysmal failure as an legitimate human rights organization—or rather, more accurately, as a *direct result* of this utter failure—Haiti's brutal coup-installed regime relied solely upon this group to fulfil the role of human rights watchdog. No human rights group worthy of the name would ever have supported or assisted Haiti's dictatorship. However, NCHR-Haiti did just that. It eagerly accepted CIDA funds and took on a key role in aiding and abetting the regime's reign of terror.

Even with the publication of all the evidence thoroughly documenting NCHR-Haiti's extremely one-sided analysis and its complicity in the coup regime's assault on democracy and human rights, this organization has continued to enjoy the generous patronage of foreign governments, like Canada, the U.S. and France. This unwavering support, however, is not surprising. These afterall were the

very governments that had planned the coup. Furthermore, these governments remained loyal partners of the illegal, undemocratic regime that they had foisted upon Haiti, until it finally lost its grip on power thanks to an election in 2006.

A recurring theme running through all of the critiques of NCHR-Haiti can best be described as their "blame-the-victim" approach to human rights. NCHR-Haiti became so ludicrously fixated on their anti-Aristide philosophy that even when the Lavalas movement was being decimated in a widespread systematic witch hunt, NCHR-Haiti continued to describe Lavalas as if it was main *perpetrator* of human rights abuses. This "blame-the-victim" perspective was also promoted by the coup regime, the corporate media and several large human rights and aid organizations—both inside and outside Haiti—that received funding from the U.S. and Canadian governments.

Because U.S. and Canadian officials also exhibit an alarming proclivity to blame Haiti's victims for the human rights abuses that they suffer, one might wonder whether this was a kind of confusion resulting from overreliance on groups like NCHR-Haiti. This, however, is a "chicken-or-the-egg" problem. Who is influencing whom? NCHR-Haiti was afterall a creature whose genesis and existence resulted from U.S., Canadian- and French-government largesse. These governments sought out, hand picked, financially supported and, in effect, created NCHR-Haiti and a host of other supposedly "non-governmental" organizations (NGOs). These NGOs then promulgated malicious, anti-Aristide slander that proved useful to the nefarious designs of their foreign mentors. These governments then appeared to consult NCHR-Haiti, as if it were an independent source of information. This phony consultation process created the convenient illusion that these government's anti-Aristide policies were the result of input from Haiti's grassroots activists.

But it wasn't just foreign governments that teamed up with NCHR-Haiti. Numerous well-respected, CIDA-funded labour, human rights and development groups became dependent on NCHR-Haiti for information and adopted its one-sided bias. (The next *Press for Conversion!* will focus on these NGOs and expose their pivotal role in destabilizing the Aristide government, supporting the Canadian government's role in the regime change and then covering up the human rights atrocities that were committed by the Latortue dictatorship. See "The Next Issue," p.2, for a list of these NGOs.)

Although these Canadian groups are engaged in some progressive efforts, they helped undermine Haitian democracy and development by supporting the 2004 coup and by ignoring the human rights disaster that followed. By disseminating virulently anti-Aristide/anti-Lavalas propaganda to their supporters and the Canadian public, these groups did a huge disservice to the poor and struggling people of Haiti for whom they profess to be advocats. And, by uncritically spreading disinformation from NCHR-Haiti, and others, they directly contradicted their ostensible goals of promoting democracy, human rights and development.

As such, these supposedly left-leaning groups were successfully manipulated by the Canadian government into being the ideal harbingers of right-wing policies. One of their main functions then—as far as the government is con-

cerned—was to disseminate information to the public which might be suspect if it were conveyed by government sources. Politicians and government bodies, like parliamentary committees, turned to these servile groups for input and advice as if they were independent non-governmental actors.

Many anti-war, human rights and development activists in Canada would not be surprised to learn that Canada's corporate media and corporate-leaning government would so completely misrepresent the truth about Haiti. However, many activists would likely be surprised to learn that they—or their allies and coworkers in progressive organizations—could be so effectively used to spread dangerous falsehoods about Haiti. These well-meaning Canadian groups, wittingly or not, helped set the stage for and then rationalized a brutal *coup d'état*. They also helped to cover up the atrocities of the coup regime's horrific reign of terror.

This level of Machiavellian trickery may seem hard to believe. How could good Canadian organizations be so duped? The answer is largely tied to the pivotal role played by NCHR-Haiti and other groups of its ilk in Haiti.

It is relatively easy for governments, like the U.S., Canada and France, to use the financial resources of their international agencies to establish and manipulate what are essentially artificial groups in the countries they have targeted for war or regime change. Such blatantly-partisan

groups as NCHR-Haiti, CARLI, CONAP, ENFOFANM, the G184, PAPDA and POHDH, can be paid off to exaggerate or even fabricate events. Their faulty reports, once passed to the media or to well-meaning but naive progressives abroad, can have a powerful effect on moulding public opinion.

When the Canadian government takes part in U.S.-led wars, regime changes or other hard-to-justify military programs, it tries to create the best propaganda smokescreen that it can to get public support. (Sometimes, as was the case with its complicity in "Ballistic Missile Defence" and the Iraq war, the Liberal government was actually successful in manipulating the compliant corporate media, various native peace groups and many members of the public, into believing that Canada is *not* involved in these unpopular U.S.-led programs, even though it was and is deeply complicit.)

The case of NCHR-Haiti demonstrates that the Canadian government is willing to engage in blatantly deceptive campaigns of propaganda using its forged groups abroad to funnel bogus information and a politically partisan analysis to the Canadian public through domestic media and organizations that are generally perceived to be objective non-governmental sources. And, it provides a clear warning that Canadian groups must be more careful not to become complicit in the government's efforts to bring public attitudes into line with repressive foreign policies and actions.

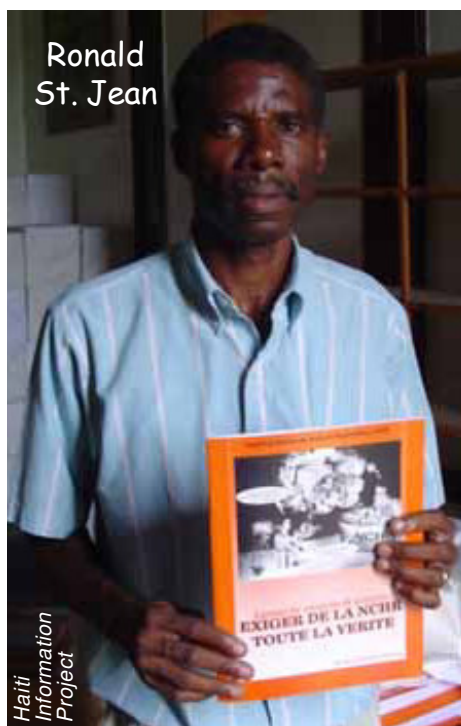
Human Rights Office Ransacked after Exposing NCHR-Haiti

By Richard Sanders

Ronald St. Jean suffered the consequences for publishing a damning exposé about NCHR called *Exiger de la NCHR Toute la Verite*. This book documents the NCHR's role as "modern day inquisitors" and "police, judge and jury" after Haiti's 2004 coup.

Immediately after the Haiti Information Project (HIP) promoted his book on Sept. 12, 2004,¹ ridiculous "rumors...were spread" saying St. Jean's Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Haitian People (CDPH), "was storing arms for Lavalas." Then, at 1 am., Sept. 18, three men in "khaki military uniforms... brandishing large automatic weapons," "broke down" CDPH's doors to "ransack the offices, breaking open desks and file cabinets while scattering papers and literature on the floor,"² including his book on the NCHR.

Reflecting on this "frightening attack," HIP notes that "while the source of the rumors cannot be directly attributed to NCHR, it would not be the first time this estimable organization has spread disinformation. The modus operandi...is that a rumor is spread, NCHR then takes to the airwaves saying it has evidence to substantiate the rumor, the police make arrests, then the matter is forgotten and



NCHR's 'evidence' is never presented while detainees rot away in prison."³

As HIP explains, "the point at the heart" of St. Jean's research on NCHR complicity with the coup regime is that "partisan political attacks have taken a more defining role in NCHR's work... than the hard and painstaking tasks of impartial documentation and investigation required of human rights organizations.... Through countless examples, St. Jean unmasks the divisive political role NCHR is playing in Haiti.... [I]f NCHR wishes to maintain its reputation as a credible human rights organization, it should immediately distance itself from the rumor mill of Haitian politics and strongly condemn the...destructive political climate that NCHR has unfortunately contributed to. Sadly...many individuals and organizations working in Haiti wonder...when it will be their turn to face

arrest based upon claims made by NCHR. This alone should speak volumes."⁴

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NCHR-Haiti Reviews Coup Regime's "First 45 Days": "Blame-the-Victims" Approach Betrays Democracy and Human Rights

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

During the vicious onslaught of violence after the 2004 coup, NCHR-Haiti gave a glowing review of the new regime to their friends in the media.¹ Their joint media conference, with the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH) (see opposite page), is the closest these two CIDA-funded outfits ever came to documenting abuses during the early days of the dictatorship.

Although one might reasonably expect that prominent, Haitian human rights groups would strongly denounce the ousting of President Aristide's legitimate, Lavalas government and the coup-installed regime's undemocratic ascent to power, the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report does nothing of the sort. There is not even a hint that the regime change was unconstitutional. By completely ignoring the illegitimacy of the *de facto* government, and by implying that a legal transition had taken place, these organizations' revealed their utter contempt for democracy.

But not only is there no mention of the fact that a savage assault on democracy had taken place, or that President Aristide had been kidnapped and exiled by U.S. Marines, their statement does not remark—even in passing—on the mass arrests and illegal imprisonment of thousands of Lavalas supporters. Neither does it mention their torture and abuse, the torching of their homes or the fact that thousands were being driven into hiding or exile. No mention is made of the thousands of elected Lavalas officials from all levels of government who were illegally fired. In fact, their meagre "report" does the exact opposite of exposing this nightmare by stating:

"Since the change in governments, NCHR-Haiti and POHDH have recorded a decrease in the number of human rights abuses and common

law violations being reported. This is not to say that violations in both senses are not still occurring, but rather that the cases are more isolated than before."²

If it is true that these two organizations "recorded a decrease" in the reports of abuse that they received, it was probably because they have little or no contact with Haiti's largely-impooverished masses that so strongly supported Aristide's government and the democracy it represented. (See details on p.8.)



"Aristide Resigns and Flies Into Exile"
—WASHINGTON POST, FRONT PAGE HEADLINE, MARCH 1 2004

Each of the six reports by independent U.S. human rights organizations that are reviewed in "The Canadian-backed Coup Regime's Reign of Terror," (see pp.3-19) states unequivocally that those who faced the brunt of the coup regime's terrifying onslaught of persecution were the poor supporters of the Lavalas Party. These abuses were committed by the coup regime's *de facto* police force and its paramilitary, death-squad allies. Remarkably, these abuses, and the total impunity of their perpetrators, were ignored in the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report.

Perhaps thinking that the journalists who had assembled to hear their

disingenuous report might find such a whole-scale whitewash to be implausible, NCHR-Haiti and POHDH made one passing reference to "five young Lavalas men" who were "brutally murder[ed]" by police.³ This single case was the only mention of any serious abuse committed by the new regime.

Oddly, the first section of their report criticised the violently-deposed Aristide government. Although no evidence was presented to substantiate their claims, their report began by blaming Lavalas for a series of grave violations. They pointed the finger at Aristide's overthrown government for "summary executions, arbitrary arrests and detention, kidnapping, rape, theft and overall corruption."⁴ No such listing was cited in connection to the newly-emplaced, illegal regime. However, the scale and severity of abuse during the first 45 days of Latortue's regime, was far beyond what could reasonably be attributed to the whole decade of elected governments under Aristide and Preval.

This was typical of the slander doled out by NCHR-Haiti and POHDH during the pre-coup period. As Prof. Peter Hallwood, author of *Damming the Flood: Haiti and the Politics of Containment*, has said:

"groups like Human Rights Watch and the blatantly partisan

NCHR deprived the [Lavalas] government of much of its moral legitimacy, by portraying Aristide as a latter-day Duvalier surrounded by lawless gangs of 'bandits' or 'chimères.' To make such a portrayal convincing was no easy task, since during Aristide's second administration [2001-2004], reports from these same human rights groups suggest that perhaps 20 or 30 individuals may have been killed by people with some (often tenuous) connection to [Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party] FL—a number difficult to compare with the tens of thousands killed by the Duvaliers, to say nothing of the ad-

ditional four or five thousand killed during Aristide's exile in 1991-94."⁵

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report reiterates its bizarre contention that "the number of reported cases of abuse has diminished" under the coup regime. They then turned their partisan focus back on exaggerating the Aristide government's alleged abuses by saying:

"what concerns human rights organizations such as POHDH and NCHR is what the current government intends to do about previously recorded abuses."⁶

NCHR-Haiti and POHDH also speak of the "former regime's practice of mobilizing practically all state institutions to serve its own interests and not those of the Haitian people" and say that this "resulted in the institu-

tionalization of impunity within the country and the systematic violation of fundamental human rights." In the report's second section, NCHR-Haiti and POHDH describe what they see as a major step forward after the coup, saying "the new regime does not exhibit the intention or the will to use key state institutions in the same manner as Haiti's previous leaders."⁷

Then, they lavish even more praise on the coup regime by saying:

"the new government is showing some interesting signs of dealing with the current situation. For example, the lists of individuals forbidden to leave the country as well as the list of senior level police officers removed from the force are encouraging examples of a will on the part of the government to combat impunity.

NCHR and POHDH hope that the government will not simply end with the removal of certain police officers, but will also continue with legal prosecution of those officers implicated in human rights violations."⁸

By thus concentrating the media's attention on alleged abuses of the deposed, Lavalas government, NCHR-Haiti and POHDH drew attention away from the hurricane of human rights abuses that were ravaging Haiti. Because many Lavalas officials and supporters were being hunted down and killed or imprisoned, they were desperately seeking safety abroad. Rather than criticising this witch hunt, the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report praised the coup regime for forbidding these victims from escaping.

As for their concern about po-

POHDH: Another Recipient of CIDA Largesse

By Richard Sanders

The Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH) is a coalition of eight groups,¹ including NCHR-Haiti. They are bound together by a fervent opposition to Aristide and by financial ties to the foreign governments behind Haiti's 2004 coup. During Latortue's regime, at least five POHDH members received CIDA funding totalling almost a quarter of a million dollars.² One member, the National Commission on Justice and Peace (JILAP), also belonged to the Group of 184 (G184). (See pp.33-43.)

In its 2004 human rights report, the U.S. State Department highlighted POHDH and CARLI (see pp.46-47) as "major human rights organizations"³ in Haiti. This view was certainly not shared by the Center for the Study of Human Rights, which did not even mention POHDH in its report for that year. (As for CARLI, the CSHR and other sources were harshly critical of this G184 member, which it called a "small, volunteer-based organization."⁴

The State Department, however, saw things differently. It cited POHDH in the context of Haitian groups that were "active and effective in monitoring human rights issues, meeting frequently with government officials."⁵ The State Department did not clarify which "government officials"

POHDH was in the habit of "meeting frequently" with. But, whether they were "officials" in the Haitian dictatorship or their U.S. counterparts seems more indicative of a subservience to power than a willingness to confront it. Showered praise upon POHDH, NCHR, the Ecumenical Center of Human Rights, CARLI and JILAP), the State Department said they "made frequent media appearances and published objective reports on violations."⁶

Although POHDH's objectivity is obviously suspect, its media access was undeniable. This was thanks in no small part to CIDA which bestowed \$300,000 for a media project run by POHDH and Haiti's Social Development and Communications Co. (SAKS).⁷

POHDH's friendly relations with the Canadian government were also evident during the pre-coup period. When Rights and Democracy—a multi-million dollar government agency—drew up its predictably anti-Aristide report praising the G184 as a neutral organization making a "highly useful"⁸ contribution to the crisis, POHDH was on the list⁹ of elitist, CIDA-funded Haitian organizations that were consulted.

But despite receiving high marks from the U.S. and Canadian governments, CUPE researcher Kevin Skerrett does not see POHDH as "substantially independent" of NCHR-Haiti. He notes that POHDH



"did not appear to publish material or reports and is essentially an appendage of NCHR. In fact, NCHR Director Espérance...also serves as POHDH treasurer, creating an inter-connection that casts doubt on any claims of independence."¹⁰

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lice abuses during the Lavalas government, this is gravely ironic because the coup regime—with NCHR-Haiti’s careful assistance—was integrating hundreds of former military personnel (from the armed forces which Aristide had bravely disbanded in the mid-1990s) into the highest ranks of the new police force. (See p.16.) This, as all independent human rights reports stated, had alarmingly-harmful potential for the future of human rights in Haiti.

It is also astonishing that the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report stated that “human rights organizations are optimistic about the arrests of individuals implicated in a series of violent acts—more significantly, high profile individuals such as Harold Sévère and former Minister of Interior, Jocelerme Privert.”⁹

As the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti explains, Sévère was a prominent member of Lavalas and the “former adjunct mayor of Port-au-Prince.” He was “arrested illegally (no warrant was produced) on March 14, 2004,”¹⁰ the day before the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH media conference. Sévère was among the thousands of political prisoners rounded up illegally in the first months of the coup regime. For the next nine months, until he was provisionally released in December 2004, Sévère was jailed on the basis of mere accusations. The charges in the trumped-up case against Sévère were finally dropped in April 2006,¹¹ after an election replaced the illegal, coup regime.

NCHR-Haiti and POHDH also said they were “optimistic” about the arrest of Aristide’s Minister of Interior, Jocelerme Privert. His arrest was carried out “illegally in the middle of the night on April 6, 2004,”¹² nine days before the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH media conference. As with Sévère, the investigation against Privert “did not reveal any evidence” against him. However, he was not released with Sévère in December, but spent an additional 19 months in jail until June 2006,¹³ for unsubstantiated involvement in the so-called “genocide,” that NCHR-Haiti fabricated with CIDA assistance. (See “Faking Genocide in Haiti,” pp.23-28.)

Although they praise the coup regime for arresting these “high profile” Lavalas politicians—who later

turned out to be totally innocent—NCHR-Haiti and POHDH criticized the regime for not *also* arresting Aristide’s prime minister, Yvon Neptune, whom they falsely accused of “participating in orchestrating”¹⁴ the faked “genocide.” On June 27, 2004, NCHR-Haiti and POHDH had their wish fulfilled when Neptune was illegally imprisoned. He was not released until July 28, 2006,¹⁵ when a judge found that there was wasn’t a shred of evidence against him.

The NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report also applauds the regime saying it was “pleased to see the nomination of a new State Prosecutor in Port-au-Prince. The State Prosecutor’s Office plays a key role in the establishment of the rule of law and is an essential tool in building democracy in Haiti.”¹⁶ This was the only mention of the word “democracy” in the NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report. Ironically, it was not invoked to critique the illegal regime’s power grab, but rather in a glowing reference to the dictatorship’s illegal appointment of a new prosecutor.

In a media release two days earlier, NCHR-Haiti described a “courtesy visit” they received from the new “prosecutor,” Jean Pierre Daniel Audain. In describing this cordial meeting, NCHR-Haiti said they were “extremely encouraged” by Audain’s “determination ...to restore strength in the law.” Most tellingly, they noted his commitment to:

“Taking public action against all those denounced by human rights organizations for their implication in acts of human rights violations.”¹⁷

This hinted at a nefarious deal by which the new regime began to illegally arrest Lavalas members based solely on accusations levelled by NCHR-Haiti. Such was the case with prominent political prisoners like musician “So Anne” Auguste whose unjust prosecution by Audain was the result of NCHR-Haiti’s baseless allegations. Audain later blocked a judge’s ruling which said Auguste should be released due to the lack of evidence. (See p.13.)

A report on “Human Rights Conditions in Haiti’s Prisons” also cites Audain for the same abuse of the “rule of law,” because he blocked the release of musician Bruno Jean Renald, when a judge found no evidence against him.¹⁸

The NCHR-Haiti/POHDH report

concludes by clarifying their views on “the difference between political persecution and the fight against impunity.” Rather than decrying the horrifying plight of thousands of Lavalas supporters, NCHR-Haiti and POHDH again revealed their blatant bias by implying that the coup regime was only arresting Lavalas supporters because they were *guilty* of human rights violations:

“It is important not to consider the arrest and prosecution of members and/or supporters of the Lavalas party who have been implicated in human rights violations and/or infractions of the law as political persecution.”¹⁹

This “blame-the-victims” approach typifies the partisanship that runs like a cancer throughout all of NCHR-Haiti’s, CIDA-funded “human rights” work.

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Faking Genocide in Haiti:

Canada's Role in the Persecution of Prime Minister Yvon Neptune

By Kevin Skerrett, researcher, Canadian Union of Public Employees and activist, Canada Haiti Action Network

In the midst of the countless tragedies following from the 2004 coup in Haiti, one particular human rights case attracted more attention than any other—the case of Haiti's most famous political prisoner, the Prime Minister of Aristide's democratically elected government, Yvon Neptune.

Neptune's case is particularly important because it reveals so much about the political and organizational dynamics behind the coup process in Haiti. And, it directly exposed a key role played by the Canadian government (through the Canadian International Development Agency—CIDA) in funding an extremely partisan “human rights” organization in Haiti called the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR-Haiti).

Within days of the coup, the NCHR accused Prime Minister Yvon Neptune of responsibility for what they said was a major massacre of 50 people. In fact, according to NCHR, this “cruel, horrific, savage and barbaric” “crime against humanity” was a “genocide.”¹ The NCHR enjoyed significant financial support from the Canadian and U.S. governments. A press release from the Canadian Embassy in Haiti distributed after the coup announced that a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) grant of \$100,000 for NCHR had been allocated for their “human rights” work.²

The particular episode of violence and the political killings for which Neptune was blamed took place in the city of St. Marc on February 11, 2004. The incident occurred during the three-week “death squad rebellion” that began February 5 in Gonaives and spread through Haiti's north. The rebel attacks launched during this “rebellion” culminated in the coup of February 29.

Two days after the massacre, a delegation that included members of the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organisations (POHDH) and the NCHR, visited St. Marc and denounced the



Photo: Pablo Aneli, AP

violence. The NCHR issued a statement saying:

“The crimes committed in Saint-Marc...are distinguished by their cruel, horrific, savage and barbaric nature and constitute the worst of the worst committed by the Lavalas regime. The killers had at their disposition powerful resources from the State and now are benefiting from official impunity. NCHR considers these acts as genocide, or better yet, as a crime against humanity.

“The genocide...was carried out less than 48 hours after a visit from Prime Minister Yvon Neptune to Saint-Marc, during which he reiterated his government's desire to re-establish ‘order’ in the city and then gave instructions for a brutal intervention against the forces of the opposition.”³

The claim that Neptune gave instructions for a “brutal intervention” is not supported by any evidence, but it forms the first allegation of Neptune's responsibility. There were many international journalists on hand at Neptune's media conference in St. Marc on February 9. While they mentioned his appeal for calm and the restoration of order, not a single reporter said anything about “instructions for a brutal intervention.” In fact, the Associated

Thanks to false allegations spearheaded by the CIDA-funded group NCHR-Haiti, Aristide's Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, was jailed without charge from June 2004 until July 2006. In protest, he engaged in two hunger strikes. Although he languished near death, NCHR-Haiti publicly opposed allowing him to receive emergency medical treatment. Disowned by its U.S. parent group, NCHR-Haiti then changed its name to the National Network for the Defense of Human Rights.

Press (AP)—not known for sympathetic reporting on President Aristide's government—said Neptune “called on Haitians to help restore calm.”⁴

On March 2, NCHR issued a media release claiming that they had investigated the events in St. Marc and were accompanied by “national and international press.” The NCHR, however, does not name any of the journalists or news agencies that supposedly accompanied them, nor do they cite any media reports that might corroborate their claims. In fact, there are no reports of this delegation in the *New York Times*, the *Miami Herald*, *AP*, *Reuters* or the *Agence France-Presse* (AFP), which were then among the most active international media outlets in Haiti. Given the gravity of the NCHR's claims, it would be very surprising if reporters accompanying the NCHR were to then choose not to report the discovery of evidence proving such a large number of killings. This alone makes the NCHR's claim difficult to accept.

In a subsequent media release on March 30, in which the NCHR called for a “model trial” to prosecute the government culprits behind the St. Marc “genocide,” it announced the formation of an organization to advocate for the victims and its provision of legal support to this group.⁵ This NCHR sup-

port was later shown to be Canadian-funded. Then, after asserting their “complete neutrality,” the NCHR claimed that:

“The la Scierie genocide constitutes the largest massacre perpetrated against the civilian population by the Lavalas regime. Numerous violent acts have been revealed—acts that were evidently carried out with the complicity of high-ranking officials of the State.”⁶

The NCHR issued yet another media release, on April 15, which directly challenged the coup-installed regime to arrest Haiti’s constitutional Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune:

“POHDH and NCHR question the reasoning behind the arrest of [Aristide’s Interior Minister Jocelerme] Privert only and not former Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, when the evidence against Neptune concerning his participating in orchestrating the La Scierie (St. Marc) Massacre of 11 February 2004 is more substantial.”⁷

Was the number of people killed in St. Marc really great enough to earn the potent and emotionally-loaded label “genocide”? Second, whatever the actual scale of the violence, was any evidence, “substantial” or otherwise, presented to suggest Neptune’s responsibility? Let us examine these questions using a review of widely-distributed international media coverage.

How many people were killed in St. Marc?

There is no doubt that violent clashes occurred in St. Marc on February 11, and during the days and weeks prior to and subsequent to that date. But was it a “genocide,” a “massacre”, or “better yet, a crime against humanity,” as NCHR claimed?

Two armed groups had been operating in St. Marc for some time. One of them, Balé Wouzé, supported the Lavalas Party and defended the elected government. Another group, Rassemblement des militants conséquents de Saint-Marc (RAMICOS), opposed the government and President Aristide in particular. On February 11, the AFP reported that battles between the two groups left two dead on the previous evening.⁸

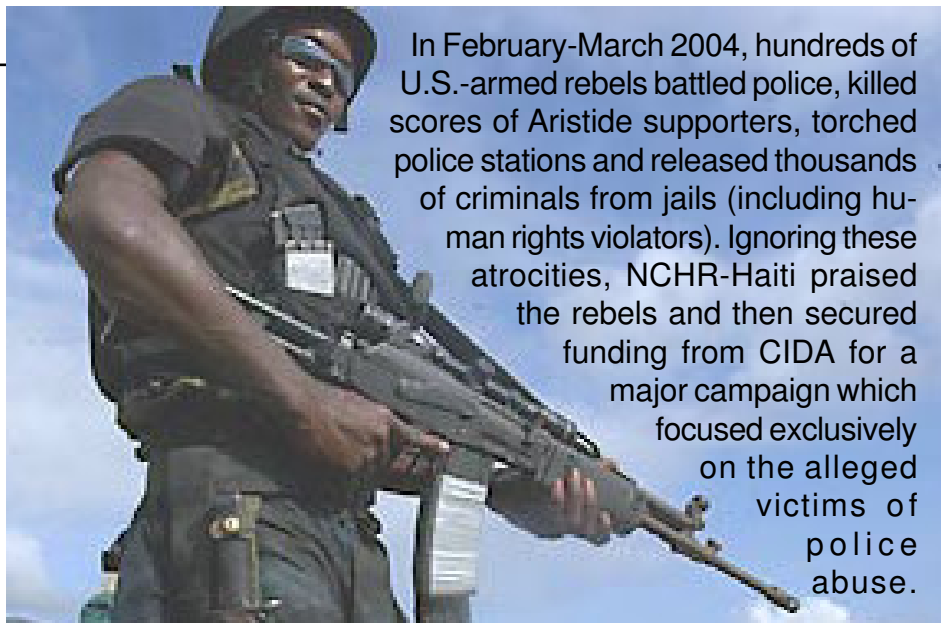


Photo: Walter Astrada, AP

In February-March 2004, hundreds of U.S.-armed rebels battled police, killed scores of Aristide supporters, torched police stations and released thousands of criminals from jails (including human rights violators). Ignoring these atrocities, NCHR-Haiti praised the rebels and then secured funding from CIDA for a major campaign which focused exclusively on the alleged victims of police abuse.

AP said that after a police raid (accompanied by Balé Wouzé members) on a RAMICOS headquarters, reporters saw the “charred remains of one person and the bodies of three people apparently shot in the back.”⁹

An AFP report said two government opponents were killed and reporters saw the bodies of three young men who had been shot, for a total of 5 dead.¹⁰

Another AFP report cited a police spokesman who

“confirmed that a police operation had been carried out in the city, but said the fatalities were the result of fighting between the anti- and pro-Aristide groups, the RAMICOS and the Balai Rouzé (sic).”¹¹

When the Haitian newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*, reported on the St. Marc incident, it said that “at least three young people were shot.”¹²

So, the international media *did* report on a violent exchange involving Haitian police, militant members of Balé Wouzé and RAMICOS. However, in all the coverage from the *Miami Herald*, AFP, AP and *NYT*, the largest number said to have been killed was five.

The Context: An armed rebellion

Some context for the St. Marc events is useful. The February-11 police raid on the RAMICOS stronghold followed the eruption of an armed “rebellion” that began in nearby Gonaïves on February 5. The Gonaïves “rebels” were joined by RAMICOS members in St. Marc, on February 7, and other armed, anti-gov-

ernment groups elsewhere. All were intent on violently challenging the constitutional authority of Aristide’s elected government.

In St. Marc, the police station was attacked and burned out. When police officers fled the city, they left control of the area temporarily in the hands of RAMICOS. By February 9, police reinforcements succeeded in re-taking St. Marc leaving several dead in various gun battles.

Miami Herald reporter Michael Ottey referred on February 15 to a “calculated plan concocted by armed gangs opposed to President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to ‘cleanse’ this impoverished land of his supporters.”¹³ This plan following a campaign to terrorize the general population by “first going after members and sympathizers of Lavalas and torching just about anything they owned. They then went after police and government officials.”¹⁴

In the context of this open and violent rebellion, police attempts to end the rebel’s “reign of terror” would seem to be the minimum response from a government responsible for protecting the population and defending the rule of law. This was especially true given the fact that the “rebellion” was disrupting the flow of international food aid upon which much of the population was dependent for survival. Thousands of lives were threatened, as aid agencies urgently pointed out.¹⁵

Media sources also provide ample evidence that the violence attributable to RAMICOS was especially

brutal. Similarly, the attacks committed by paramilitary rebels in other Haitian cities was horrifying. However, very few of the rebels' many serious human rights violations against the Lavalas government's police, or against civilian defenders of democratically elected Lavalas government, were ever mentioned in NCHR media releases.

Completely omitted are any NCHR references to RAMICOS burning down a health clinic or their prior torching of two radio stations. These are suspicious omissions for a supposedly non-partisan human rights organization, like NCHR. These incidents were however reported by various international media sources.

The NCHR's March 2 press release focused exclusively on condemning violence purportedly carried out by the Haitian police and by supporters of Haiti's besieged government.¹⁶

On April 9, 2005, some 13 months after NCHR first issued its dramatic claims of "genocide" in St. Marc, former NCHR Director Anne Fuller, now a consultant for Human Rights Watch, published a report on the events of February 11.¹⁷ Indicating that she had carried out an investigation of several days length at the end of March 2004, Fuller concluded, somewhat tentatively, "I believe at least 10 people and perhaps 12" were killed in St. Marc.

However, Fuller adds that "some but not all were RAMICOS members" thereby acknowledging that some of the dead were either members of Balé Wouzé or, in fact, other victims of armed RAMICOS partisans, or uninvolved bystanders. Fuller admits frankly that she has "no information" regarding who might have "ordered" violence in St. Marc. She concluded by urging NCHR to issue a report to support their claims. The NCHR has still not filed any such report.

While several killings described by witnesses suggest illegality and even brutality, it is equally true that some of those killed may have died in battles with police who were attempting to arrest the heavily-armed rebels who were contributing to the insurrection that eventually resulted in a successful coup against the constitutional government of Haiti.

Following the coup, RAMICOS

was described as a "powerful presence" in St. Marc. For example, during the Canadian-backed, coup-installed regime, one member of RAMICOS, Thompson Charlienor, gained the (unelected) position of "Deputy Mayor" of St. Marc,¹⁸ and led a "victims advocacy" group—likely the same group supported financially by Canada through NCHR.

No evidence has ever been presented by NCHR to support their repeated claims that 50 individuals were killed on February 11 in St. Marc. Furthermore, there is no evidence of an illegitimate exercise of force by Haitian police. Given the apparent inclination among most western journalists to report what were often merely allegations of violence attributed to Aristide's government, their police and supporters of the Lavalas party, it seems extremely unlikely that the kind of major massacre claimed by NCHR was missed or not reported. This leaves only the statements of one organization—one which has failed to provide any supporting evidence. When reporters have asked the NCHR's Director, Pierre Espérance, about the discrepancy between international media reports and his claim that 50 were killed in St. Marc, he has replied that the other bodies were "eaten by dogs."¹⁹

It is also revealing that none of the above-cited sources—the international media, NCHR or Anne Fuller—appear to have interviewed any representatives of the pro-Lavalas group Balé Wouzé. However, another Haitian human rights organization—the Comité de Défense des Droits du Peuple Haïtiens (CDPH)—did publish a detailed 67-page report that included among its sources NCHR media releases, international media reports and a written statement by representatives of Balé Wouzé. The Balé Wouzé statement is roughly consistent with the international media reports in terms of the numbers killed, and adds other details which completely contradict NCHR's version of events:

"At roughly 11 o'clock in the morning, [RAMICOS] broke into the health clinic of Dr. Ivetho Mayette in order to abduct the victim [Balé Wouzé member Edrice Thlusemé, who was shot the day before by members

of RAMICOS] who was receiving treatment. They demanded of the doctor that he be turned over, and upon his refusal to do so, they torched the clinic. They were then caught in *flagrante delicto* [i.e. committing a crime] by a police patrol; to defend themselves, they opened fire on the police while fleeing in the direction of their base in Scierie [St. Marc]. The police followed them.... In the exchange of fire with police, five individuals were killed according to inhabitants of the region. At no moment did members of Balé Wouzé gain access to Scierie, nor was there any massacre."²⁰

The Balé Wouzé statement also includes a very disturbing report of vicious reprisals against their group for three days after the February 29 coup that removed President Aristide. Nineteen individuals are listed by name as having been executed (shot) by RAMICOS members.

Among those killed, several were subjected to atrocities: Jeanty Renonce was dragged behind a Toyota pick-up through the streets of St. Marc before being burned in front of the office of Balé Wouzé. Dieulifaite Fleury was hung from a mango tree and then burned. Mitilien Somoza was shot and then mutilated on March 2, 2004.²¹

These reports are essentially claims of a different massacre altogether. Although they should not be accepted at face value, they should be investigated and evaluated. However, NCHR never mentioned these reports, let alone investigated them. Nor, of course, was NCHR involved in organizing or financing "victim's organizations" or "model trials" related to these killings. In turn, there is apparently no recognition by the international media or by NCHR's funders at CIDA that alternative and much more detailed reports of the St. Marc episode even exist.

Is there any evidence of Neptune's Guilt?

Following the coup, NCHR Director Pierre Espérance repeatedly demanded that Prime Minister Yvon Neptune be prosecuted for his "implication" in the so called "genocide" of St. Marc. When a warrant was issued for the ar-



Guy Philippe,
rebel commander
of the
"Front Résistance
pour la
Libération Nationale"

On March 2, 2004, NCHR-Haiti issued a media release stating: "The NCHR takes this opportunity to congratulate the members of the Front Résistance pour la Libération Nationale...."

Source: Cited in an "Open letter to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety," October 31, 2006. <www.ijdh.org/pdf/politicalprisoner10-31-06.pdf>

rest of Neptune in June 2004, the Canadian-backed, Haiti's coup-installed "interim government" referred specifically to NCHR's allegations in their rationale for his arrest.

As awareness of Neptune's situation grew, particularly since the launch of his second hunger strike on April 17, 2005, various international agencies condemned his mistreatment. Even the UN recognized that NCHR had distorted this story. Following an April 2005 investigation into the violence in St. Marc, UN Human Rights Expert on Haiti, Louis Joinet, "dismissed accounts of a massacre"²² and described instead a series of killings in "confrontations" between two armed groups (Balé Wouzé and RAMICOS), with casualties on both sides. Joinet's conclusions were echoed by Thierry Fagart, chief of the UN Mission's Human Rights division, who also said

"since the beginning of the procedure until today, the fundamental rights, according to national and international standards, have not been respected in the case of Mr. Neptune and Privert."²³

But not only did the UN's two top officials dealing with human rights in Haiti completely repudiate NCHR's most significant and reported claims, NCHR-Haiti's parent organization (NCHR-New York) actually issued a

media release in early March 2005 to distance itself from its renegade offspring. The New York-based NCHR Executive Director pointed out that NCHR-Haiti Director Espérance had issued a statement

"critical of the decision by UN and Haitian authorities in Haiti to provide emergency medical treatment to former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.... Neither Mr. Espérance, nor any member of the staff of NCHR-Haiti, speak for or on behalf of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights, its board or its staff."²⁴

For many observers, this statement, along with those of Joinet and Fagart, have completely discredited NCHR-Haiti. To evade this destroyed reputation NCHR-Haiti changed its name to the National Network for the Defense of Human Rights.²⁵ However, this only contributed to its image as a desperate, failed organization.

In the process of attempting to establish a case using only allegation and innuendo, the NCHR grotesquely exaggerated one particular incident of violence with a distinctly partisan and political objective—the persecution of one of the Lavalas Party's most prominent figures. These conclusions raise a different question, that of the ultimate origins of the real motivations and agenda of NCHR.

Canadian Government Funding for NCHR

NCHR is a favoured beneficiary of Canadian government funding agencies and aid organizations. By all accounts, it appears as though both the Canadian and U.S. governments—through CIDA and the U.S. Agency for International Development—have funded NCHR for many years. In fact, within weeks of the allegations launched by NCHR against Prime Minister Neptune, the Canadian Embassy in Haiti announced that \$100,000 would be allocated to that group.²⁶ Coinciding with this CIDA-funding announcement, were NCHR media releases that challenged the post-coup regime for not arresting Neptune for complicity in the St. Marc deaths. Although the NCHR claimed that the evidence of his complicity was "substantial," they never actually produced any evidence at all.²⁷

However, the NCHR's partisan, advocacy efforts did have a substantial impact on some Canadian institutions and NGOs. Rights and Democracy, an otherwise credible (federally-funded) organization previously led by respected, former politicians such as Warren Allmand and Ed Broadbent, appears to have uncritically accepted what groups such as NCHR report.²⁸

Likewise, during the months leading up to the 2004 coup, the Quebec-based L'Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale (AQOCI)—a network of 53 international aid groups—became so swept up in the anti-Aristide and anti-government hysteria generated by groups such as NCHR that they issued a press release on December 15, 2003, urging the Canadian government to withdraw all support from the "Lavalas party regime," and to denounce the Aristide government for being "riddled with abuses of human rights."²⁹

Like NCHR, both Rights and Democracy and AQOCI (and most of AQOCI's constituent groups) receive very large portions of their operating budgets from CIDA. It is perhaps not surprising then that they would uncritically accept the word of a CIDA-funded, sister group in Haiti. However, Canadian citizens, journalists and even elected leaders are not generally informed of these financial connections,

nor are they publicly reported.³⁰

Perhaps the most extreme case of a Canadian organization adopting a fiercely partisan anti-Lavalas/anti-Aristide position is an informal coalition of development agencies called Concertation Pour Haiti (CPH), based in Montréal. In February 2004, just before the coup, CPH issued an 8-page documents with a litany of accusations against the Aristide government, many similar in nature to those of NCHR and, in some cases, NCHR is cited explicitly. CPH also endorsed the political opposition's proposal for "resolving" the crisis in Haiti: Establishing a "transition" government presided over by a member of the Supreme Court and establishing a non-constitutional Conseil des Sages. This is precisely what took place following the February 29 coup.³¹

The politicization of CIDA funding to Haiti reached a point of some absurdity during the illegal, post-coup regime. As a major supporter of Haiti's 2004 coup d'état and the "interim government" that followed, the Government of Canada used "international aid" money to pay the salary of CIDA employees working as top officials in the new, Canadian-backed Haitian government. Such was the case of Philippe Vixamar, who worked as the Deputy Minister of Justice for Haiti's coup-installed regime. The human rights report written by Thomas Griffin for an investigation by the University of Miami's Law School, described a peculiar interview conducted with Vixamar, during which he disputes all evidence of grave human rights abuses by the Haitian police.³² (See "CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of 'Justice,'" pp.29-31.)

In this context, it is hardly surprising that NCHR has had very little to say about the many serious human rights violations recorded by Griffin and others. Material published by AP, Reuters, the UK *Observer*, *Toronto Star*, *Miami Herald*, Amnesty International, the International Crisis Group and others, have shown definitively that the Haitian police (during the Canadian-backed, coup-installed regime) conducted violent raids on poor urban

neighbourhoods where Lavalas support is most concentrated.³³ However, very few of these attacks were ever mentioned in NCHR's media releases.

Even when NCHR did acknowledge the summary executions of Lavalas supporters by Haitian police, it was claimed that there was not enough information to confirm police responsibility.³⁴ For instance, in an October 28, 2004, media release the NCHR quite calmly reported that 15 young people (ten boys and five girls) had been tortured and executed in an area where a "commando unit" of "masked [police] officers" had been seen storming the home in which 13 of these youths had just been meeting. Nonetheless, NCHR refers to these killings—which appear to constitute a real "massacre"—with some skepticism,

On March 5, CIDA signed a contract giving NCHR-Haiti about \$100,000 to create a major campaign that amounted to framing Lavalas leaders, including Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, for a "genocide" that never happened.



President Aristide and Prime Minister Neptune at Haiti's Independence Day ceremony in 2003.

noting that the act was "attributed" to Haitian police. This contrasts sharply with the NCHR's reports about the killings in St. Marc, where they quickly concluded that a barbaric act of "genocide" had been ordered by Yvon Neptune himself. In the case of the torture and killing of 15 youths, the NCHR collected the names of a few victims and asked the "interim government" for a "commission of inquiry." However, once this call was predictably ignored by the coup-installed regime, the victims were promptly forgotten by NCHR.

Even more disturbing are cases where NCHR completely ignored executions committed by police during the

coup-installed regime. For example, on January 14, 2005, a young journalist and law student, Abdias Jean, was executed by Haitian police after he witnessed them killing people. Reported by *Reuters'* Haiti correspondent Joseph Delva, and John Maxwell of the *Jamaica Observer*, Jean's execution was later condemned by the Association of Haitian Journalists, the International News Safety Institute, the Inter American Press Association, and eventually even by UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura. In what was, perhaps, its most glaringly-obvious partisan omission, the NCHR did not even mention this especially-ugly, high-profile police killing.³⁵

By all accounts, these stark problems with the integrity of NCHR appear to pose no problems for officials at CIDA or with any others in the Government of Canada. In fact, it appears that NCHR continued to gain additional funding from Canadian taxpayers as the importance of "human rights" reporting increased after the coup and during the lead up to the elections overseen by the coup-installed regime in early 2006.

While during the years leading up to the anti-Aristide coup, the NCHR's activities focused almost exclusively on what they claimed were victims of human rights abuses committed by members of Haiti's government and police, their orientation shifted abruptly after the coup. Following the coup, NCHR's criticism of attacks by Haitian police officers

became muted. And, when the NCHR did report on these deaths, they were qualified with suggestions that when innocent civilians were killed by police, it was described as "collateral damage."

Prior to the coup, NCHR had a consistent practice of directly linking police abuses to the government—particularly when civilians were said to have been "targeted." Then during the coup-installed regime, NCHR referred to such police killings as "collateral damage," which legitimized them as unintended "accidents" during police operations. A search of NCHR's website shows not a single use of the term "collateral damage" prior to the 2004 coup.

The evidence reviewed above confirms the conclusions reached by an increasing number of independent observers. There was no genocide in St. Marc, and not even a “massacre,” but rather a series of violent confrontations resulting in a number of deaths—possibly as many as 10 or 12. And, these victims were on both “sides” of the conflict that led to the February 29 coup. Our review strongly suggests that NCHR’s confident allegation—that Prime Minister Neptune was implicated in these killings—was entirely political in nature, and remains completely unsupported by any evidence.

Finally, the issues raised by this episode also suggest that a serious review of CIDA’s human-rights programming is in order. We need to ensure that Canadian-funded and supported organizations that are ostensibly working in defence of human rights and democracy are not being manipulated into serving the very narrow foreign policy or trade policy interests of the Canadian government. Clearly, Canadians do not want their government to join the list of countries best known for manipulating a rhetoric of human rights and democracy while working toward self-serving political and economic objectives that are in fact hostile to both.

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Source: For the unedited, original version of this article, refer to *ZNet*, June 23, 2005 <www.zmag.org/content/show/article.cfm?SectionID=55&ItemID=8142>

CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of "Justice": Shills and Scam Artists in the Deadly Con Game of Haiti's 2004 Coup

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

Although the coup regime's Deputy Minister of Justice, Philippe Vixamar, was "a political appointee" of that unconstitutional government, it was the "Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) [that] assigned him to this position and...[was] his direct employer." This is an example of what the Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) (see pp.15-16) described as the "key roles play[ed]" by "the United States and Canadian governments...in the justice system in Haiti, including paying high-level government officials."¹

During an interview with Vixamar, CSHR researchers learned that the Deputy Minister was in "his fourth consecutive year of employment for CIDA," and that he had previously spent 10 years working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and three years with the U.S. Department of Justice.²

One of Vixamar's previous CIDA assignments in Haiti was with the Canadian Human Rights Fund in Haiti, of which he was the coordinator.³

At the time of the coup that overthrew Aristide's elected government in the spring of 2004, Vixamar was working for CIDA's Cooperation Program Support Unit in Haiti (UAPC), which is said to "increase the effectiveness of Canada's official development aid" in that country.⁴ A few weeks after the Canadian-backed coup, in his role as an "Expert in Justice and Human Rights" at the UAPC,⁵ Vixamar reviewed the first phase of a \$100,000 CIDA grant that had just been awarded to NCHR-Haiti.⁶

This "Special Victim Support and Assistance Project"⁷ was a highly-politicised and partisan effort, designed in part, to frame top Aristide officials. In particular, NCHR-Haiti made unfounded accusations blaming Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, for what it provocatively called the "genocide in la Scièr" (a town near St. Marc). This incident was, in fact, part of the struggle



Photo: Wadner Pierre

Many protests, like this one at Haiti's Ministry of "Justice," called for the release of political prisoners. But their cries fell on deaf ears. Philippe Vixamar, a long-time CIDA bureaucrat, denied that there were any such prisoners in Haiti. However, as the dictatorship's Deputy Minister of "Justice," Vixamar himself oversaw their illegal arrest and incarceration. Curiously, he was assigned to this position in the coup regime by CIDA, which remained his direct employer.

between the Aristide government's police and heavily-armed, U.S.-backed rebel forces that were trying to violently overthrow Haiti's democracy. NCHR-Haiti took this incident—in which a handful were killed, on both sides of the struggle—and, without any corroborating evidence, claimed that 50 had been "massacred." (See "Faking Genocide in Haiti," pp.23-28.)

When Vixamar reviewed NCHR-Haiti's progress on this blatant propaganda campaign, he concluded by saying: "The project has been effectively launched. NCHR is demonstrating a lot of professionalism."⁸

By July 2004, NCHR-Haiti's had helped create an "Association of the Victims of Genocide in la Scièr" (AVIGES) and Vixamar signed a CIDA review of this "special project" which concluded that "NCHR is performing well and the partnership between AVIGES and NCHR seems perfect."⁹

Soon thereafter, CIDA promoted Vixamar to the penultimate position in Haiti's Ministry of "Justice," thus giving him considerable power in the coup regime's frontal assault against Haiti's pro-democracy activists, especially those linked to the recently-ousted Lavalas government. However, when interviewed by CSHR's human rights

investigators, Vixamar denied that Haiti's police, its courts or prison system were being used in the repression of Lavalas. To prove this, Vixamar expressed his utter confidence in the coup-installed regime's "exclusive reliance" upon NCHR-Haiti:

- (1) "to alert it when the Police or the Courts commit human rights abuses,"¹⁰ and
- (2) to evaluate the human rights records of "former soldiers" that were quickly being integrated into Haiti's police force.¹¹ (See p.16.)

Vixamar's blind faith in the reliability of NCHR-Haiti as a neutral human rights monitor, suggests close parallels with the role of a "shill" in what is often called a "confidence trick." As defined in Wikipedia:

"The confidence trickster, con man, swindler, grifter, scam artist or con artist often works with one or more accomplices called shills, who help manipulate the mark into the con man's trick or dishonest plan."¹²

And, as Wikipedia correctly points out, con artists and their shills are employed in political applications of the confidence game:

"A shill is an associate of a person selling goods or services or a political group, who pretends no associa-

tion to the seller/group and assumes the air of an enthusiastic customer. The intention of the skill is, using crowd psychology, to encourage others unaware of the set-up to purchase said goods or services or support the political group's ideological claims. Skills are often employed by confidence artists and governments."¹³

If Vixamar was one of the skills, who were the con men running this scam?

Although Vixamar's presence in the illegal government's so-called "Ministry of Justice" shows that CIDA was playing a key part in the broader con game known in polite circles as the "Interim Government of Haiti," the CSHR human rights report makes it clear that it was U.S. government agencies that had taken the lead and were running this whole operation from behind the scenes. Both Vixamar and his boss, Haiti's Justice Minister Bernard Gousse, had previously worked for USAID and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). These U.S. agencies were instrumental in orchestrating the 2004 coup. This is amply documented in the research of Anthony Fenton¹⁴ and it was also revealed in CSHR interviews with "two Haitian administrators of IFES' projects in Port-au-Prince."¹⁵ These IFES staff people stated that although the

"ouster of Aristide 'was not the objective of the IFES program,...it was the result.' They further stated that IFES/USAID workers in Haiti want to take credit for the ouster of Aristide, but cannot 'out of respect for the wishes of the U.S. government.'"¹⁶

Another powerful U.S. government agency, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) was also involved in the coup-regime's so-called "justice" ministry. Vixamar noted that the NDI was advising his ministry and that its objective was "to work with local groups throughout Haiti and create liaisons with the Political Section at the U.S. Embassy."¹⁷

Vixamar's vision of Haitian justice was, of course, perfectly aligned with the virulently anti-Aristide position of the coup regime, its foreign backers and the elitist Haitian organizations



The cartoon above, from the cover of Ronald St. Jean's book exposing the lies of NCHR-Haiti (see p.18) shows a reporter saying: "The press says there were 3 to 5 dead. You, of the NCHR, say 50. Where are the 45 others?" NCHR-Haiti's spokesperson, Pierre Espérance, then exclaims: "Uhh! They might have been eaten by wild dogs."

Unbelievable as it may seem, this was his actual response when confronted with the lack of evidence for NCHR-Hait's outrageous claims. The Haiti Action Committee described his excuse as: "the equivalent of a young child claiming his dog ate his homework."

that they funded. For example, in his interview with CSHR investigators, Vixamar denied outright that there were any "human rights and constitutional abuses within the criminal justice system."¹⁸ He also repeatedly insinuated that the Lavalas Party and its "chimères" were the real source of violence in Haiti. When asked why Lavalas leader, Father Gérard Jean-Juste "who remained in jail after a warrantless arrest.... Vixamar's only comment was 'he [Jean-Juste] was providing asylum to 'chimères.'"¹⁹ (See "Chimère: The 'N' word of Haiti," pp.50-51.)

In early 2005, Stuart Trew of the weekly community paper, *The Ottawa XPress*, did something that Canada's mainstream, corporate dailies were unwilling to do—he exposed CIDA's role in supporting the illegal regime's persecution of members and supporters of Lavalas. Trew confronted Yves Petillon, the director of CIDA's Haiti Program, with the fact that the CIDA-payrolled Deputy Minister of Justice in Haiti, Philippe Vixamar, was

"denying that human rights abuses were being carried out by anyone but an alleged pack of pro-Lavalas 'thugs,' despite evidence the police were arresting without warrants and executing Lavalas supporters in the

street."²⁰

Petillon responded that Vixamar was "not speaking for CIDA. And we don't endorse anything of what he said. I cannot comment on his personal point of view."²¹

However, as Kevin Skerrett—a Canada Haiti Action Network activist and researcher with the Canadian Union of Public Employees—pointed out: "it was not Vixamar's personal point of view that was under discussion, it was Vixamar's professional point of view as a representative of Haiti's Ministry of Justice."²²

But despite being exposed in the CSHR report as a totally partisan opponent of Lavalas, and any slight irritation that may have momentarily been caused by coverage in alternative media, Vixamar continued to carry out the kind of abusive carriage of justice that the Canadian government apparently wanted in Haiti. In fact, notwithstanding Petillon's attempt to publicly distance CIDA from Vixamar's enthusiasm for the coup regime's peculiar vision of "justice," Vixamar remained in his influential position until July of 2005.²³ That's when he was replaced by Dilia Lemaire, another long-time employee of CIDA²⁴ who had been listed, next to Vixamar, as an "Expert in Justice and

Human Rights” by CIDA’s UAPC.²⁵

Both Petillon and Vixamar appear to have been shills for the coup regime in general and for NCHR-Haiti in particular. Certainly both were intimately connected to the NCHR’s “special project” that, with CIDA funding, had so artfully fabricated a “genocide” using nonexistent victims. According to documents obtained by Anthony Fenton through Access to Information, Petillon was the CIDA officer who made the initial recommendation, on March 11, 2004, that CIDA should approve about \$100,000 in funding to NCHR-Haiti for this project.²⁶ Later that day, Petillon co-signed that CIDA contract with NCHR-Haiti’s Executive Director, Pierre Espérance.²⁷

Those were heady times for CIDA, and for the coup regime in Haiti. On the very next day, March 12, Gérard Latortue was sworn in as prime minister for the coup-installed dictatorship, thus replacing the country’s legitimate prime minister, Yvon Neptune. After Neptune’s unceremonious exit from office, he was subjected to libellous accusations of criminal responsibility for the phony “genocide” that had been concocted, with CIDA’s financial support, by NCHR-Haiti.

Remarkably, NCHR-Haiti’s second progress report to CIDA on its “special project” took direct credit for the putting Neptune behind bars. Under the subheading “Assessment of progress towards projected results,” NCHR-Haiti’s primary “result” was described with these unambiguous words: “Arrest of former Prime Minister, Yvon NEPTUNE, on June 24, 2004.”²⁸

It was perhaps unfair of NCHR-Haiti to give sole credit to their CIDA project for the arrest of Neptune. Yes, NCHR-Haiti *was* certainly the strongest and loudest voice crying out for Neptune’s detention. And yes, NCHR-Haiti *had* essentially concocted a fictitious event used to justify his illegal internment for the next two-years. And yes, NCHR-Haiti *did* champion the campaign to pursue those responsible for the phony “genocide.” And yes, NCHR-Haiti *did* lead the way in spinning this incredibly valuable piece of anti-Aristide propaganda that resulted in the illegal arrests of other Lavalas leaders. And yes, NCHR-Haiti’s bogus example



Prime Minister Yvon Neptune

of “genocide” *was* used as a pretext for justifying the overthrow Haiti’s democratic system.

However, despite all this, it would still seem unfair to give all of the credit to NCHR-Haiti for the crime of arresting Neptune. In all fairness, there are other important institutions and actors to be acknowledged. For example, Neptune’s incarceration could not have been executed without the efforts of Haiti’s RCMP-trained national police. And, let’s not forget the infamously overcrowded and unsanitary Haitian prison system which, like the police, was administered by the coup regime’s CIDA-funded Ministry of “Justice.”

And, in particular, how can we forget to credit the dictatorship’s very own CIDA-paid Deputy Minister of “Justice,” Jean-Philippe Vixamar, and his CIDA boss, Yves Petillon. These Canadian government officials were, afterall, responsible for securing NCHR-Haiti’s CIDA financing and for giving it glowing appraisals for accomplishing its CIDA-authorized mission in Haiti.

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Vixamar praised NCHR-Haiti for their \$100,000 “special project” which helped nonexistent victims of a faked “genocide in la Scièrè.” NCHR-Haiti’s CIDA-funded campaign pinned the blame for this phony incident on top Lavalas politicians such as Aristide’s Prime Minister Neptune. In their “Assessment of progress towards projected results,” NCHR-Haiti reported to CIDA that the primary “result” was: “Arrest of former Prime Minister, Yvon Neptune, on June 24, 2004.”

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Mario Joseph (MJ): The Latortue regime turned the world upside down. Justice and the rule of law were thrown out the window. It was a dictatorship. ... [T]he 'civil society' groups and the upper classes were constantly demanding 'justice' during Aristide's term, calling him a predator, accusing him of all sorts of human rights violations. Then they got into power and they carried out the most unimaginable acts!

Darren Ell (DE): When a country goes through 32 *coup d'États* in 200 years, does a tradition of non-respect for law develop among those that are supposed to apply the law.

MJ: Definitely. People in power are lax in their application of the law.... The poor majority of Haiti see things very differently than the elites. Take the 2004 *coup d'État* as an example. The people were demanding that Aristide's mandate and the constitution be respected. The upper classes were demanding Aristide's departure.... The illiterate population of Haiti...were calling for law and democracy whereas the others were calling for anarchy!

DE: Let's talk about...the violation of human rights law....

MJ:[The] agreement signed in April 2004 between [the UN's military force] MINUSTAH and the [coup-installed] government of Haiti...gives complete immunity to MINUSTAH. I'm currently working on the case of July 2005 massacre in Cité Soleil [a Port-au-Prince slum].... [N]either the victims nor BAI can file a case against MINUSTAH because they're immune....

If *The Lancet* [article, "Human Rights Abuse and other Criminal Violations in Port-au-Prince Haiti, September 2-8, 2006,] cited 8,000 murders in Port-au-Prince between 2004 and 2006, we have to double this to reflect what happened throughout the country. Rape was used as a political weapon....

We've worked for over 200 already who've been locked up for their political affiliation, for refusing to accept the coup and for demanding a return to democracy.... The Canadian government funded NCHR [see pp.3-22] to prepare the [legal] cases of La Scierie, a case [of faked "genocide"] which led to the imprisonment of Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, Minister [of the Inte-

An interview with Mario Joseph



Photo: Darren Ell

rior, Jocelerme] Privert and... [MP] Amanus Maette. [See pp.23-32.]

It is incredible that so-called democratic and civilized countries like Canada, France and the U.S. would participate in the disinformation campaign that led to the kidnapping of Aristide....

....And the hypocrisy! ...[After Latortue left power,] Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter MacKay, criticized Haiti for the imprisonment of Yvon Neptune...but said absolutely nothing before, not even during Neptune's near-fatal hunger strike.... I don't understand how a globalized world can function with such hypocrites in power. These crimes would never be tolerated in Canada, France or the U.S., so why are these governments allowed to commit them in Haiti?

....In Cité Soleil...MINUSTAH is ...killing people.... The government, the media and even the international community act as if this is normal.... Take the...massacre of Dec. 22, 2006, carried out by MINUSTAH.... I have 22 death certificates in my possession.... We've got people with bullet holes all over their bodies but no journalists going down to find out how it happened.

DE: But we'll see this type of coverage on a website like HaitiAction.net.

MJ: Yes, and sites like IJDH [Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, see pp.4-6], thanks to people like... Lovinsky Pierre Antoine [see pp.6-7], Kevin Pina [see p.33] and others....

DE: ...[A] crime like this in Canada... would be on the front pages for weeks.

MJ: Absolutely. We've got unarmed

Haiti's leading human rights lawyer, a director of the Bureau des avocats internationaux (BAI), is trying to redress crimes of the anti-Aristide coups of 1991 and 2004.

He insists the guilty must be held accountable, including members of the U.S., Canadian and French governments.

Needless to say, he does not receive Canadian government funding. Neither is he affiliated with the CIDA-supported lawyers' committee, CARLI, that helped spread fear and terror throughout Haiti after the Canadian-backed coup installed Gérard Latortue's dictatorship in 2004. (See "CARLI," pp.46-47.)

innocent people, young children, being shot to death.

DE: ...[T]he only reason given for these massive assaults on unarmed people is that "criminals," "bandits" or "gang members" are present....

MJ: Since the coup, these terms are used...to justify killing. Even if there are slight differences between Haitian, Canadian or American law, our legal systems share the same principles. You're innocent until proven guilty.... Since the kidnapping of Aristide, the process of legal accusation has been reduced to name calling: the word *chimère* is used like a death sentence. [See "*Chimère*: The 'N' word of Haiti, pp.50-51.] This is how all the political prisoners, members of Lavalas, were rounded up during the coup. Their names were announced on the radio! If your name was on the radio, you had to hide right away. Now they're looking for 'bandits,' the pretext used for the December 22 massacre.... It's as though the U.S. and Canadian Embassies no longer existed.... When Aristide was in power, these...[governments] did nothing but condemn human rights violations. Now, one would think these violations had ceased.... The question of excessive force is not even raised concerning MINUSTAH.

Source: Excerpts from an interview by Darren Ell, a Montreal-based photographer. For the complete interview, see "Fighting for the Rule of Law in Haiti," April 25, 2007. <www.haitiaction.net/News/HIP/4_25_7/4_25_7.html>

The G184:

Exposing the Haitian Elite's Enthusiasm for Violence

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

In the late 1990s, wealthy members of Haiti's business sector became increasingly fixated on retaking the reigns of power from the country's popularly elected president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, the upstart priest who so eloquently represented the country's impoverished masses. Working in league with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), key members of Haiti's corporate elite created the Democratic Convergence (DC), a grouping of fourteen political parties "supported by neo-Duvalierist ex-military members as well as members of the Haitian business elite"¹ devoted to ousting Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party from government. But try as they might, the right-wing DC "couldn't win any power, they had no base of popular support, but what they did have was the backing of Washington, of Paris and Ottawa."²

Ottawa's backing came largely via the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Like USAID, CIDA monies were channelled exclusively to supposedly

"grassroots' NGOs and business organizations who were aligned with the opposition Democratic Convergence.... [which] never managed to gain more than 8% voter support in Haitian elections."³

But, when it "became clear" that the DC was "an abysmal failure" and "a failed experiment that was going nowhere,"⁴ they created the Civil Society Initiative Group (CSIG). However, the CSIG was plagued with same image problems as its progenitor. Being "predominantly a collection of business and religious elite organisations," it was "wholly unrepresentative of the Haitian majority."⁵ (See "CSIG Members: At the Core of the G184," p.40.) With the CSIG so obviously an appendage of Haiti's ruling class, a new and improved front organization was sorely needed. So, in December 2002, the CSIG cleverly

"widened its membership to include some peasant organisations, student groups and non-governmental or-

ganisations, and became the Group of 184... However, despite its pretensions to represent a variety of social sectors, the words and actions of the Group of 184 suggest that it remains under the control and direction of its initial instigators and original driving force—the private sector."⁶

The G184 quickly became the main vehicle for pushing the interests of those domestic and foreign elites whose shared goal was to rid Haiti of Aristide's popular, ruling party. Because its members owned and controlled most of the country's natural and human resources—as well as most of its mainstream radio, TV and print media—the G184 was a well-placed "fifth column," ready and willing to collaborate with the foreign governments bent on regime change. Together, they returned political control of Haiti to those who had always felt entitled to rule.

The G184's two main leaders and spokesmen—Andy Apaid, Jr., and Reginald Boulos—are among Haiti's most prosperous millionaires, whose businesses are dependent on import-export sectors. (See "The G184's Powerbrokers — Apaid and Boulos,"

pp.42-43.) With this duo firmly ensconced at the helm, the G184 orchestrated strident opposition to Aristide's government. Finally, in February 2004, their so-called "civil society" efforts—in combination with the terrorizing violence of heavily-armed, U.S.-backed rebels, an invasion force of U.S., Canadian and French troops and a compliant right-wing media—culminated in the coup that deposed Aristide's entire government and replaced it with a brutal, business-friendly administration.

During the years leading up to the 2004 coup—and then during the human rights disaster that followed—the G184 and its leadership pretended to embrace nonviolence. However, this was one of their many bald-faced lies. In reality, the G184 and its leaders were actually major proponents and instigators of violence in Haiti. As this article will show, they worked closely with criminal, paramilitary and military organizations that not only relied on carnage to overthrow the democratically elected government of Haiti, they then demonstrated their commitment to state-sponsored terror as a way of keeping their coup-installed regime in power.

The G184 melts into the ether



"For all intents and purposes the Group 184, once touted as representing 'civil society' in Haiti, no longer exists.... The organization produced almost daily press releases in the period leading up to the forced ouster of president Aristide..... Today, their voice is conspicuously silent showing that they were never an organization that truly represented Haitian society but rather a USAID and CIDA-funded project charged with creating the pretext for the removal of Haiti's constitutional government.... Once their role in overthrowing Aristide was complete, they quietly melted into the ether." **Kevin Pina**

Source: Email to Richard Sanders, August 27, 2007.

Kevin Pina is a U.S. journalist and film maker living in Haiti. He was arrested in September 2005 for reporting on the ransacking of Father Gérard Jean-Juste's church by masked members of Haiti's National Police (HNP). Jean-Juste, a popular humanitarian leader, would likely have become the Lavalas Party's candidate for president in 2006. He was, however, unable to run for office when he was illegally imprisoned for eight months on bogus charges concocted by the Canadian-backed, coup regime.



Thomas Griffin

Foreign Creators/Mentors

Despite their tight grip on the levers of Haiti's economy, the G184 needed help in their antidemocratic struggle to oust and replace the country's duly-elected government. Therefore, the G184 collaborated with—and was manipulated, if not controlled by—U.S., Canadian and European government agencies that shared the Haitian elite's virulent hatred of Aristide's policies. In particular, the U.S. government played a key role in forming and then directing not only the G184, but many of its member groups.

For its part, the European Union channelled at least US\$890,000 through the CSIG to at least seven, influential members of the G184 network.⁷

Not to be outdone, CIDA directly financed at least ten members of the G184. In fact, CIDA funnelled some \$24 million into about a dozen projects that were run entirely, or in part, by these G-184 members. (See p.39.) CIDA also poured Canadian tax dollars straight into the coffers of the G184 itself. For example, CIDA gave \$334,643 for a project run by the G184 and one of its more reactionary, member groups—a think tank called the Foundation for a New Haiti,⁸ which was also led by Andy Apaid, Jr. Canada's benevolence was also cited in a French government report listing a \$500,000 grant allotted to the G184 alone.⁹

Without such generous disbursements from CIDA and other foreign governments, the G184 would never have arisen in the first place. The G184 was, in fact, largely fabricated by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). Although IFES is, in part, financed by such “renowned democracy-lovers as Exxon-Mobil, Citibank and Motorola,”¹⁰ “80 percent

of its funding” comes from the U.S. State Department and USAID.¹¹

During the coup regime, IFES directors included Jean-Pierre Kingsley, who was then Canada's Chief Electoral Officer.¹² Other IFES and USAID bureaucrats and contractors eventually ascended to top positions within Haiti's coup-installed regime. For instance, Gérard Latortue, who became the dictatorship's prime minister, and Bernard Gousse, who was its Minister of Justice, were both employed by IFES for

CIDA poured about \$24 million into twelve Haitian projects that were run—entirely or in part—by G-184 member groups. CIDA also funnelled more than \$500,000 straight into the coffers of the G-184 itself.

many years prior to ruling Haiti's post-Aristide nightmare.¹³

Thanks to a “multi-million dollar” IFES program, the G184 became the most powerful tool in the elite's regime-change arsenal. Here's how the G184's genesis was described by Miami lawyer and human-rights researcher Thomas Griffin—who worked as a “federal law enforcement officer for 10 years”¹⁴

“IFES...formulated groups that never existed, united pre-existing groups, gave them sensitization seminars, paid for people to attend, paid for entertainment and catering, and basically built group after group.... They reached out to student groups, business... [and] human rights groups—which they actually paid off to report human rights atrocities to make Aristide look bad.... They bought journalists, and the IFES associations grew into the Group of 184 that became a solidified opposition against Aristide.”¹⁵

It was for good reason then that, when interviewed by Griffin and fellow investigators with the University of Miami's Centre for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR), IFES administrators bragged that Aristide's ouster was “the result” of the “IFES program,” and IFES and USAID employees took credit for bringing down Aristide's government.¹⁶ (See “CIDA Bankrolled Coup's Deputy Minister of ‘Justice,’” pp.29-31.)

Although it is difficult to determine how many millions of U.S. dollars were funnelled to the G184 and its members, we do know that for one fiscal year alone (ending September 2003), USAID spent US\$3 million on their so-called “Government and Democracy” program in Haiti. We can safely assume that this money—going to “civil society, the media, human rights organisations and political parties”¹⁷—was directed exclusively to anti-Aristide organizations, and that the G184 secured a sizable share of the spoils.

Inciting Violence

After spending generations struggling to establish a system to represent their political interests, Haiti's majority finally felt they had achieved a remarkable success when they twice elected President Aristide and his Lavalas Party. The coups of 1991 and 2004 however reversed those victories by abruptly supplanting his administrations with militaristic regimes, and destroying the country's democratic system of government. Such fascist regime changes are simply not possible without the ample use of brute force.

Although the G184 always claimed to embrace nonviolence, it was in league with domestic and international forces that openly used violence as if it were a legitimate means of attaining and maintaining political power. Several allies of the G184 have employed extreme violence, including mass murder, to eliminate those perceived to be in their way. To this day, violence is still being directed at pro-democracy advocates calling for Aristide's return to Haiti.

The fact that the G184 was anything but nonviolent is easily illustrated by describing their working relationships with at least five allies that used bloodshed to impose their will upon Haiti's populace.

Paramilitary Rebels

On the domestic front, leaders of the G184 conspired with vicious bands of U.S.-backed, paramilitary rebels that were largely reconstituted from death squads associated with the previous, anti-Aristide coup of 1991 and from the military that Aristide had disbanded in the mid-1990s.

In mid-February 2004, when these rebels were rampaging through Haiti, destabilizing Aristide's government and setting the final stage for the coup, BBC news garnered international support for the G184 with such typical, fawning statements as this:

"One of the most prominent opposition platform spokesmen, Andy Apaid, wanted to make it clear that he did not approve of violent methods.... Andy Apaid invoked the names of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, saying that he wanted to try and lead the opposition in a form of peaceful protest."¹⁸

This was not an isolated example of the media's sycophantic coverage. As the Haiti Information Project pointed out:

"Apaid had been extensively quoted in the international media at the time saying their movement was non-violent and had no connections to the paramilitary bands."¹⁹

However, according to the CSHR report, the G184 actually did work in "combination with the violent band of armed attackers closing in on Port-au-Prince" in February 2004, and "provided the political force in Haiti that led to Aristide's ouster."²⁰

But the G184 has always denied that it supported these "armed attackers" who burned down police stations and other government facilities, released thousands of imprisoned criminals (including human rights violators), and murdered countless supporters of Aristide's government.

The G184's assertions that it stood for nonviolence were never taken seriously by most Haitians. They know that there have always been intimate links between their country's ruling elite and the most violent, reactionary elements in their society. It was not a real surprise then when, more than three years after the coup, the real extent of the G184's ties to the rebel forces fi-

nally begun to unravel.

This happened when two top rebel leaders and a Haitian businessman revealed that the rebels received generous financial backing, weapons and logistical support from prominent Haitian businessmen, including the G184's top representatives, Andy Apaid, Jr and Reginald Boulos.²¹

In late May 2007, Wilfort Ferdinand (alias Ti Wil)—a commander of the rebel violence in February 2004—was interviewed on two local radio stations. He exposed some telling details about the role of "certain members of the business community" who had funded the rebel's paramilitary campaign against Aristide's government. Ti Wil told Haitian listeners that he had recently refused overtures from these same business leaders who now wanted him to take up arms against the elected government of Aristide associate René Preval, who was elected president in 2006.

What would Ti Wil reveal next? We will perhaps never know because within days, Ti Wil was arrested by Haitian police and UN troops. During their search of his home, Haitian police say they discovered a kilogram of "a white substance resembling cocaine."²²

During the February 2004 coup, President Aristide had publicly denounced former-military rebel leader Guy Philippe, and his criminal colleagues, as terrorists engaged in the international drug trade. However, the U.S. and Canadian governments—along with their powerful pawns within Haiti's elite—displayed a markedly-different perspective. For instance, shortly after the coup, when Ti Wil had "appointed himself Chief of Police of Gonaives...ruling Haiti's fourth largest city as a personal fiefdom," he shared a podium with rebel commander Guy Philippe. It was late March 2004, and

"U.S.-installed prime minister Gérard Latortue was flown into Gonaives by U.S. military helicopters accompanied by David Lee, Canadian ambassador to the Organization of American States. During a mock celebration of Aristide's ouster, Latortue publicly praised the men [Philippe and Ti Wil] as misunderstood 'freedom fighters' while ambassador Lee nodded his head in approval."²³



Guy
Philippe

On May 27, 2007, the day after Ti Wil's arrest, Guy Philippe went on radio and "took the accusations a step further." Perhaps fearing that he might be arrested before he could blow the whistle on Apaid and the G184's role in financing the precoup violence, over which he had presided, Philippe used the interview to

"name names of business and political leaders who backed the paramilitary insurgency against Aristide's government by providing arms, ammunition and logistical support.

Philippe's list included members of what was then touted as the 'peaceful opposition' in Haiti that led demonstrations in the capital and other cities demanding Aristide's resignation. High on the list was Andy Apaid, the leader of the civil society organization called the Group 184."²⁴

During an interview with Philippe in late March 2007, Professor Peter Hallward of King's College London (UK) asked whether the "wealthy families that despised Aristide—Apaid, Boulos, Baker in particular—did they subsidise your movement?" Philippe replied

"Yes we had meetings with various businessmen and they helped us....they contributed around [US]\$200,000 to buy arms and ammunition. The businessmen seemed keen to help us at all costs."²⁵

That interview also revealed that Philippe was now extremely angry at the G184-linked elite—which he called “the leaders of Haiti’s rotten political class and mafioso oligarchy.” They had, he said, broken their advance agreement with the rebels that the coup would not involve foreign troops. Philippe was bitter that this secret deal was discarded when “Apaid, Boulos and the leaders of our corrupt political class...pressured the international com-

is uninterrupted.”²⁷ In reality, after U.S. troops kidnapped the country’s president—with help from Canadian special forces²⁸—they set in motion the installation of an illegal government that did not have the consent of Haiti’s Parliament as required by their constitution. It was a well-planned coup, but it wasn’t the coup that Philippe had expected.

Not surprisingly, Philippe’s revelations about G184-leaders’ complicity in the 2004 regime change received

their role in the violent overthrow of Haiti’s democracy. To the contrary, their impunity—like the increasingly ludicrous but officially sanctioned story of the G184’s commitment to nonviolence—will likely remain intact, thanks to the myth-making machinery of the elite-owned, G184-linked media.

Perhaps just coincidentally, the DEA’s long-delayed actions against Philippe and François came one day after Aristide’s birthday, when many thousands of pro-democracy advocates in seven Haitian cities demanded his return from forced exile in South Africa. Even Reuters reported that 10,000 people had started marching from one poor Port-au-Prince neighbourhood alone. The DEA’s timing helped ensure that “the sparse international news reports” of these huge rallies were “overshadowed” by coverage of their raid on Philippe’s home.³¹

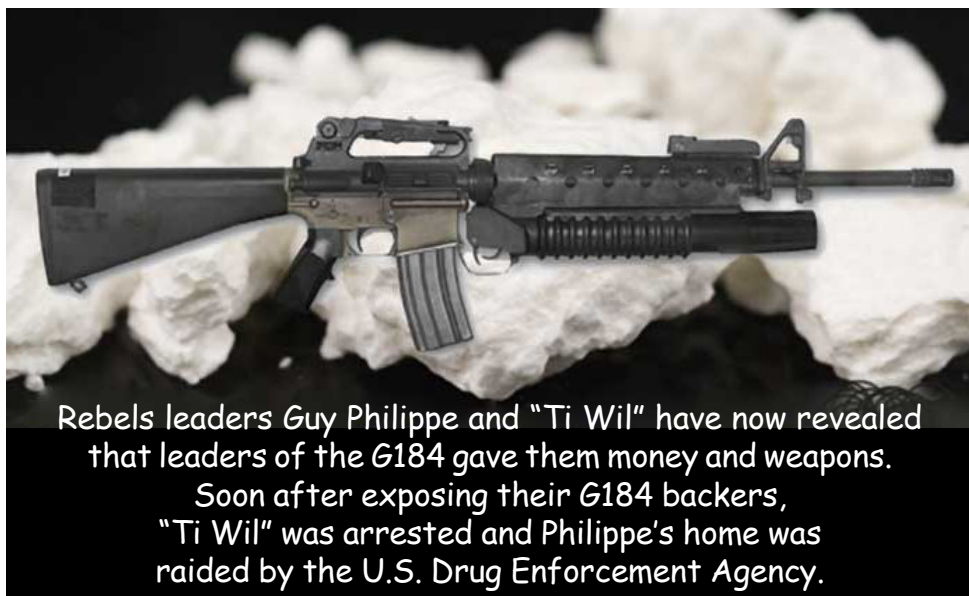
Mainstream news of the DEA raid conveniently neglected to mention Philippe’s recent interviews about rebel ties to media-darling Apaid and the G184. A Google “News” search in early August 2007 found that of the 60 initial articles about that raid, only one linked it with Philippe’s controversial disclosures.³²

A month later, an Associated Press article vaguely hinted at the rebel-G184 connection, saying that Philippe had “accused the United States of trying to silence him for political reasons.” The article did not name Apaid or Boulos. Nor did it mention the G184. It only commented that:

“months ago Philippe...denounced several powerful Haitians who he said helped finance the rebellion. Some Haitians have speculated that those well-connected people are now using their influence to get him arrested.”³³

Gang Violence

The CSHR’s 2004 human rights report revealed compelling evidence that a murderous, anti-Aristide gang in one of Port-au-Prince’s most-destitute neighbourhoods received “financial, firearms and political support from wealthy businessman and politico, Andy Apaid and businessman Reginald Boulos.”³⁴ The gang in question, led by Thomas Robinson (alias “Laban-



Rebels leaders Guy Philippe and “Ti Wil” have now revealed that leaders of the G184 gave them money and weapons.

Soon after exposing their G184 backers, “Ti Wil” was arrested and Philippe’s home was raided by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.

munity to invade our country.” Philippe also fumed that Haiti’s political/business elite, and Andy Apaid in particular “advised the U.S. embassy to kidnap Aristide.”²⁶

The joint U.S./Canadian/French invasion of Haiti, had come just as Philippe and his men were poised to take Haiti’s capital and capture Aristide. The worst betrayal, Philippe said was that the elite had robbed him and his men of their agreed-upon role as the “security” force for the post-coup regime. This job went instead to the UN.

In short, Philippe was used. He and his men did much of the violent, dirty work that set the stage for the coup but were then lied to and cast aside. Haiti’s elite and their foreign mentors secretly supported the rebel cause and then used it as a pretext to publicly justify their own invasion and occupation of Haiti. Pushing the limits of Orwellian doublespeak, U.S. embassy officials in Haiti even went so far as to claim that their intervention had “probably prevented a coup” and that Haiti’s “constitutional” “political process

scant, international coverage.

For almost three and a half years since the coup—including his wildly unsuccessful bid for the Presidency in 2006—Philippe had been allowed to operate freely in Haiti. Then, on July 16, 2007—just weeks after his exposé about the G184 on Haitian radio—helicopters and aircraft from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) descended dramatically upon his home. Philippe was not there, and has reputedly been in hiding ever since.

However, Lavaud François—a Gonaives businessman with “close ties to Philippe”—was arrested elsewhere on that same day by the DEA.²⁹ The reason for the DEA’s actions against François may be found in the fact that he had recently

“bragged publicly that he helped finance the rebellion against Aristide along with André Apaid of a civil society organization called the Group 184.”³⁰

Such revelations, of course, do not mean that Apaid or other G184 leaders will ever be held accountable for

yè”), operated from Cité Soleil—where most of the more than 300,000 poverty-stricken residents still support Aristide. CSHR investigator, Thomas Griffin, reported that “Witnesses repeatedly explained” that the “siege” on Cité Soleil by Labanyè’s heavily-armed gang was “an effort to hold hostage and stifle the political voice of the poor, and to wipe out the Lavalas movement.”³⁵

CSHR researchers spoke to “Cité Soleil witnesses [and] police officers” who “reported that Apaid’s support of Labanyè keeps the police from arresting him.” Apaid himself “told [CSHR] investigators that he has directed the Haitian Police not to arrest Labanyè but to ‘work with him.’” The fact that Labanyè received “official protection” was illustrated by a “wanted poster” displayed in every Port-au-Prince police station. It had the

“names and photos of 30 suspected gang leaders, but not Labanyè [who was] perhaps the best known of all local gangsters. Police confirmed that all those pictured are believed to be Lavalas supporters. Numerous police officers also confirmed that Labanyè is killing for Apaid...and that they remain under orders not to arrest him.”³⁶

The CSHR report goes on to state that

“Cité Soleil residents, police officers and Cité Soleil leaders who refused Andy Apaid’s overtures to switch loyalties, stated that Apaid ‘bought’ Labanyè with [U.S.]\$30,000.... Multiple sources stated...that Labanyè has a large United States flag draped in front of his headquarters under which he forces victims to kneel and beg for their lives before killing them.”³⁷

In December 2004, Labanyè’s gang members conducted one of their numerous massacres of Aristide supporters in Cité Soleil. This precipitated an attack by UN forces who killed even more Aristide allies. As one Cité Soleil witness said

“Labanyè, controlled by André Apaid and Reginald Boulos, began a heavy attack...and many people were killed. The UN then used this as a pretext to invade our neighbourhood and end our calls for Aristide’s return. It is clear they are working together to exterminate us.”³⁸

International Troops

Less than two weeks before Labanyè’s gang violence triggered a deadly UN raid against Lavalas supporters, the UN’s top General in Haiti, Augusto Ribeiro Pereira, said he would not bow to the “extreme pressure” he was receiving from the U.S., Canadian and French governments to step up violent incursions into Haiti’s poorest districts.³⁹ However, UN raids

Apaid...who made strident calls in the media for a new UN crackdown on Cité Soleil.⁴²

Early the next morning, January 7, 2006, Bacellar was found “shot in the head,” in what many newspapers called an “apparent suicide.” However, the country’s largest weekly paper, *Haiti Progrès*, noted that

“many observers doubt the suicide theory.... Some question whether



During the coup regime, the G184—and its government mentors in Canada, the U.S., France and Haiti—put intense pressure on the UN to step up violent raids into impoverished neighbourhoods where residents support Aristide’s return.

Juan Gabriel Valdès, the UN’s civilian chief in Haiti, agreed to their plan saying: “I think there’ll be collateral damage but we have to impose our force, there is no other way.”

Juan Gabriel Valdès

did not cease and on September 1, 2005—two months after UN troops killed dozens of innocent civilians while storming an impoverished neighbourhood in the capital—Pereira finally resigned as the UN’s top military commander in Haiti.⁴⁰ He was replaced by another Brazilian general, Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, who was also pushed to increase the violence against Aristide’s poor supporters.

The G184’s pressure on Bacellar reached a head on January 6, 2006. That night, Bacellar had a “tense meeting with the president of Haiti’s Chamber of Commerce, Reginald Boulos, and Group 184 leader Andy Apaid.”⁴¹ Along with these representatives of “the right-wing business elite,” Bacellar’s “tense meeting” included representatives of the UN and “coup-regime officials.” Together, they

“put ‘intense pressure’ on the general ‘demanding that he intervene brutally in Cité Soleil.’...This coincided with a pressure campaign by Chamber of Commerce head Reginald Boulos and sweatshop kingpin Andy

some sectors could have wanted to kill Bacellar [sic] for his reluctance to crackdown on Cité Soleil, the rebellious shanty town that U.N. troops have been unable to pacify. In recent weeks, the Haitian bourgeoisie had been heavily pressuring the MINUSTAH commander to carry out aggressive actions there.”⁴³

There was however dissension within the UN leadership in Haiti. On the day before Bacellar’s death, Chilean-born diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdès, the UN civilian chief in Haiti, said that UN troops would go ahead with the strategy of increased violence. He announced UN readiness to “occupy” the “already militarily-surrounded” Cité Soleil, saying: “We are going to intervene in the coming days. I think there’ll be collateral damage but we have to impose our force, there is no other way.”⁴⁴ Some UN officials said Bacellar “had opposed Valdes’ plan.”⁴⁵ But, thanks to Bacellar’s untimely death, the Valdes plan—as vigorously demanded by the G184, occupying governments and the coup regime—finally won out.



The G184 demanded that the RCMP-trained Haitian National Police get automatic weapons to help them take better aim at violence caused by poor street youth.

Private Militias

G184 leaders had also tried other violent means to achieve their corporate-sector goals. At a May 2005 meeting between Haitian business leaders and the illegal, coup regime's Chief of Police, Léon Charles:

"Boulos demanded the U.S.-installed government...allow the business community to form...private security firms and arm them with automatic weapons. This was clearly a demand to legalize the business community's own private militia's to kill what Boulos, and others in his circle, have referred to as 'Lavalas bandits.'"⁴⁶

Commenting on this HIP report, *Haiti Progrès* said that "This, in fact, is already the bourgeoisie's current, albeit unofficial, practice."⁴⁷

While G184 leaders demanded better weapons for Haiti's corporate-funded militias, human rights activists pushed for

"the disarmament of all untrained and unauthorized armed groups—including the former soldiers and all private security forces funded by businessmen to protect their interests."⁴⁸

However, the dividing line between "former soldiers" and "private security forces" was difficult to determine, as an article on the eve of the 2004 coup points out:

"Haiti's business elite already has at its disposal a vast number of private security forces, many of whose personnel were formerly part of the Haitian army."⁴⁹

Haitian National Police

After the 2004 coup, Haiti's illegal regime quickly began to integrate "former soldiers" into the Haitian National Police (HNP). By November of that year, some

"200 soldiers from the disbanded army had been officially integrated into the Haitian National Police since Aristide's ouster, taking posts throughout the country...[and] former soldiers have taken the highest HNP command positions throughout Haiti. 'Many more,' [said Philippe Vixamar, the coup regime's CIDA-paid, Deputy Minister of Justice] 'are currently training at the Haitian Police Academy.'"⁵⁰

It is also worth noting here that:

(1) the integration of former military personnel into the HNP was vetted by the National Coalition for Haitian Rights—Haiti, a thoroughly discredited group which received generous funding from CIDA and USAID (see pp.3-32) and

(2) the HNP itself benefited from at least \$27 million in CIDA funding for RCMP efforts, including training and crowd control.⁵¹

During the 2004 coup regime's reign of terror against Aristide supporters, the HNP worked in tandem with UN troops, as well as with death-squad "attachés," to exterminate opponents of the coup regime. For example, during numerous pro-democracy rallies, unarmed Lavalas supporters were shot and killed by police and attachés, un-

der the protective gaze of the UN's so-called "peacekeepers."⁵²

The Council on Hemispheric Affairs report in early 2006 said this of the coup-regime's chief of police:

"One of the island's major human rights offenders is Léon Charles, current police/military attaché at the Haitian Embassy in Washington and the HNP's former Director General. It was an act of sheer effrontery that [coup-regime Prime Minister] Latortue appointed him to that [diplomatic] post.... As Haiti's police chief; he oversaw the gunning down of unarmed pro-Aristide Lavalas demonstrators by his own men, even...planting weapons on the innocent victims' corpses. Yet, the U.S. has raised no objections to his deplorable record, and the UN mission to Haiti has done nothing to follow up on allegations of gross abuses.

Through the outright support of uniformed thugs like Charles, the UN force has backed up the ill-trained and violence-prone HNP... even though that force is particularly renowned for its heinous human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrests and detentions, and extrajudicial killings."⁵³

However, even this shocking level of police violence was not enough to satisfy Haiti's elite. "The anti-Aristide Group of 184 spokesperson Charles Baker," a wealthy, white Haitian sweatshop owner and tobacco farmer,⁵⁴ "called for more guns and ammunition for the HNP to 'fulfil their duty.'"⁵⁵

Soon after the coup, during a meeting with HNP chief Léon Charles, another G184 leader, Reginald Boulos, "suggested the Latortue [coup-installed] regime allow businesses to withhold taxes...to buy more powerful weapons for the police. 'If they don't allow us to do this then we'll take on own initiative and do it anyway,' Boulos stated."⁵⁶

Sure enough, the coup regime did give its business allies a massive, three-year tax break,⁵⁷ but they didn't have to pay for the HNP's new weapons. Thanks to the U.S. lifting its arms embargo on Haiti, the HNP soon received at least 5,435 new, "military-style weapons...and some 1 million rounds of ammunition."⁵⁸

G184-spokesmen Boulos and Baker were not the only HNP advocates pushing to get deadlier weapons for the illegal regime's murderous police force. Another was the RCMP's Dan Moskaluk, the spokesman for the UN's CIVPOL force in Haiti. This Canadian "defended the arms transfer as a means of standardizing and keeping track of the [Haitian] police force's weapons."⁵⁹

Conclusion

Evidence that the G184 gave crucial support for the pre-coup terror tactics of Philippe's well-armed rebels and Labanyè's gang, flies in the face of this

"civil society" group's publicly declared Gandhian approach to promoting peace and reconciliation within Haitian society. It was equally contradictory for the supposedly nonviolent G184 to exert such tremendous post-coup pressure on two other violent institutions at play in postcoup Haiti, namely, UN occupation troops (from the U.S., Canada, France and Brazil) and the coup-regime's paramilitary police force.

Some may think it unfair to compare the violence of Philippe's death-squad rebels and Labanyè's urban thugs with the highly disciplined work

of international troops, or with Haiti's National Police—trained and vetted by the RCMP with CIDA funding. Such reservations may, in fact, be justified. Given their ready access to vastly superior weapons, training, logistical support and financial resources, the "legitimate" institutions of state violence certainly have a much greater ability to inflict violence to suppress Haiti's pro-democracy supporters than do small, paramilitary groups of Haitian criminals. Therefore, because Haiti's relatively ill-equipped rebels and gangs are more-or-less mere amateurs in the business of inflicting violence, it really *isn't* fair

Projects Funded by CIDA ¹ Run by or benefitting G-184 Member Groups ²			CIDA-Funded G-184 Member Groups		
Project Budget		Notes	Group	Funding from CIDA (Cdn \$)	Notes
Total	Coup Period (Apr.04-Mar.06)				
A \$10,000,000	\$5 million	"OAS 'Special Mission' Project"	CARLI	Amt. unreported	A beneficiary of Project A ¹
B \$5,000,000	\$1,437,796	"Kore Fanm Fund" (Run by Haiti's coup regime and various foreign gov't-funded "NGOs")	CRESFED	54,000	Social action centre for human rights ³
C \$213,556	\$152,398	<i>"Civil Society Participation in the Governance of Haiti"</i>	Fanm Yo La	10,781	Public awareness, re: political parties ³
				150,000	Public awareness, re: political parties ^{1,3}
				Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project B ¹
D \$334,643	\$248,159	<i>"New Social Contract Development"</i> (Run by G-184 and FNH)	FNH	220,000	Judicial Reform project (JRAP) ³
				Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project C ¹
				Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project D ¹
E \$6,925,802	\$3,000,570	<i>"Educational Opportunities and Governance of the Education System"</i> (Run by Haiti's coup regime, the Haitian Economists' Assoc., several right-wing private education foundations and the Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches)	FONHEP	264,550	Urgent program in Arbonite ³
				Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project E ¹
ISC			ISC	Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project C ¹
				Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project F ¹
JILAP			JILAP	23,440	Human Rights training ³
				Amt. unreported	A beneficiary of Project A ¹
MOUFHED			MOUFHED	Amt. unreported	A beneficiary of Project A ¹
MPP			MPP	218,001	Action re: Women's rights ³
				Amt. unreported	A "Key Haitian Partner" running Project B ¹
				Amt. unreported	A beneficiary of FNH's JRAP project ¹
SOFA			SOFA	198,549	Violence against women ³
\$22,966,985	\$9,906,701				
Sources:					
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3. Cadre de Cooperation Interimaire pour Haïti, Tableau des Projets a effet direct par axes et par pays, Conference de Cayenne, 18 Mars 2005. <72.14.205.104/search?q=cache:Qbklc5cHzL0J:www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/actual/pdf/BRA42.pdf>					
Glossary of Acronyms					
CARLI	Lawyers' Committee for the Respect of Individual Freedoms		JILAP	National Episcopal Commission on Justice and Peace	
CRESFED	Center of Social Research and Economic Training for Development		MOUFHED	Haitian Women's Movement for Education and Development	
Fanm Yo La	Haitian Feminist Collective Against Exclusion of Women		MPP	Papaye Farmers' Movement	
FNH	New Haiti Foundation		OAS	Organization of American States	
FONHEP	Haitian Foundation for Private Education		SOFA	Solidarité Fanm Ayisyen	
ISC	Civil Society Initiative Group				

to compare the scale and intensity of their violence with that inflicted by the full-time, professional soldiers sent to Haiti by major military powers like the U.S., Canada and France.

Although the G184's supposed opposition to violence was an obvious contrivance, it was not questioned by the corporate media. On the contrary, mainstream news—mimicking the blatant bias of the coup's mentors—presented the G184 as a heroic movement devoted to peacefully resolving Haiti's crisis. The media has also toed the line by generally blaming Haiti's violence on the so-called *chimère*—an epithet for Aristide supporters living in impoverished urban areas. (See “‘*Chimère*’: The ‘N’ word of Haiti,” p.50.)

The media's constant repetition of such black-and-white myths was used to justify not only the G184's efforts to overthrow Aristide's democratically elected government but also to rationalize the post-coup witch hunt that killed, imprisoned and exiled many thousands of innocent supporters of Haiti's democratic system.

Despite all the lies spread by such elite organizations as the G184—and its member groups that own and control much of Haiti's media—most Haitians were not fooled into believing that the G184 stood for nonviolence. Neither did Haiti's majority fall for the fairy tale that the G184 represented Haiti's broadbased, grassroots, “civil society.” The fact that the G184 is “dominated by one specific sector with very particular interests—private sector business associations,”⁶⁰ has been noted by many observers. For instance, the Haiti Support Group (HSG), a UK-based solidarity group, remarked that although the G184 is “little more than a vehicle for a narrow, elite sector”

“[it] successfully portrayed itself—particularly to foreign journalists and donor countries—as THE representative organisation of Haitian civil society as a whole.”⁶¹

This false image of the G184 has had a number of serious repercussions. For example,

the HSG noted that during the coup-installed regime of 2004-2006, the “very limited amount of consultation with Haitian civil society organisations” was “monopolised by the Group of 184.”⁶²

Through the G184, Haiti's business elite—in collaboration with foreign government agencies such as USAID and CIDA—wielded tremendous influence over the coup regime that it had helped to install. As a result, according to the HSG, a “vast array” of “vibrant and inclusive organisations from Haiti's civil society” were “ignored.”⁶³

Unfortunately however, the G184 did far worse than merely monopolize dialogue with the coup regime or cause some of Haiti's “civil society” to be unjustly “ignored.” More than any other Haitian organization, the G184 was responsible for leading, coordinating and manipulating that country's anti-Aristide forces in a concerted effort to provoke the illegal, 2004 regime change. Their leadership not only invited international military troops to kidnap the country's president and invade the country, they helped facilitate the installation of a repressive regime

and then spurred on military and police violence to keep it in power.

As if destroying Haiti's democracy was not enough, the G184 aided and abetted a reign of terror that sought to eliminate the country's most popular political party. Scheming from the shadows, the G184's leaders manipulated every conceivable force of violence available in the vain hope that they could rid Haiti of those who still stubbornly supported Aristide and his duly elected Lavalas party.

However, in reviewing the violent and antidemocratic functions of the G184, it is important to remember that this shrill voice of Haiti's rich and powerful elite was really just a creature of outside forces from the U.S., Canada and Europe. It was after all, birthed and nurtured by foreign agencies that employed it as a fifth column to cater to their corporate and political interests.

As we examine the horrors that resulted from the G184's devious antidemocratic work, we can only hope that our politicians—and their allies in government-funded, “nongovernment organizations” (NGOs)—will someday be held accountable for their roles in destabilizing Aristide's government, and then turning a blind eye to the human rights catastrophe that followed.

And, as taxpayers who funded Canada's nefarious role in Haiti, we must be aware that our hands too are stained. This was not the first time that Canadians were fiscally conscripted into complicity with a violent travesty of justice. And, of course, it will not be the last.

We must therefore be exceedingly wary whenever our government, or the “NGOs” on its payroll, beseech us to support a war or regime change that supposedly promotes peace, democracy and human rights, or fixes a “failed state.” When the media then conveys heart-rending pretext incidents from the targetted country, we must be alert to the possibility that they were perhaps conjured up with CIDA funding in order to hoodwink us into supporting our government's bellicose plans.

CSIG Members: At the Core of the G184

The G184 was an extension of the Civil Society Initiative Group (CSIG) whose membership list (see below) represented the most affluent members of Haiti's society. Both the G184 and the CSIG received CIDA funding for projects that destabilized Aristide's elected government, thus paving the way for the 2004 coup.

- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Haiti
- Franco-Haitian Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Center for Free Enterprise and Democracy
- Protestant Federation of Haiti
- New Foundation of Haiti
- National Haitian Foundation for Private Education
- Committee for Patriotic Initiatives
- National Association of Distributors and Importers of Petroleum Products
- Democratic Initiatives
- National Haitian Teachers' Confederation
- Haitian Tourist and Hoteliers' Association
- Friends of Nature Federation
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Lower Artibonite
- Chamber of Commerce & Industry of the Southeast
- General Independent Organisations of Workers of Haiti
- Artibonite Entrepreneurs' Association

Source: This membership list is from “Haiti's civil society: So much more than the 184,” Haiti Support Group media release, July 6, 2004. <haiti.support.gn.apc.org/july06.htm>



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Archived copies of the now-defunct G184 website

Although the G184 is now defunct, saved copies of its website (from December 8, 2003, to April 5, 2005), are still available in the "Web Archive":

<web.archive.org/web/*http://group184.org>

The G184's Powerbrokers — Apaid and Boulos:

Owners of the Fourth Estate; Leaders of the Fifth Column

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

Andy Apaid and Reginald Boulos may be Haiti's most despised men. Despite this obvious shortcoming, the media—or “fourth estate”—often presented them to the world as Haiti's greatest saviours.

This farce was only possible because most of the country's major media firms are owned by the anti-Aristide elite, including Apaid and Boulos. Apaid, for instance, is the “founder of Tele-Haiti,”¹ the “main cable television network,”² while Boulos “owns...the USAID-funded Radio Vision 2000...and *Le Matin*,”³ which describes itself as “a non-partisan, non-ideological newspaper.”⁴ While Haiti's elite-owned media pretends to be neutral, it was instrumental in the political successes of the Group of 184 (G184).

Being two of Haiti's richest white businessmen—the owners of numerous factories and mass media outlets—Apaid and Boulos were poorly suited to representative anything but an exceedingly thin slice of Haiti's population. And yet for years, as leaders and spokesmen for the G184, they presided over a multimillion-dollar coalition “of wealthy individuals, businesses, professional, media, and other associations.”⁵ Dominated by the country's biggest corporate entities and funded by foreign governments, the G184 brought together the cream of Haiti's civil society.

Under the guidance of Apaid and Boulos, the G184 successfully pushed the ultraviolent, antidemocratic agenda of Haiti's elite to its logical conclusion—the brutal 2004 coup. Their dream come true was to rid Haiti of its elected government and supplant it with a more business-friendly regime. Because CIDA, and other government agencies from the U.S. and Europe, blessed them with tremendous financial, logistical and diplomatic support, and made their dream a bloody reality, it is worth examining the backgrounds of these two industrial magnates.



Andy Apaid, Jr.

Andy Apaid, Jr.

Although he is widely known as “the founder and the leader of the Group of 184, the political ‘movement’ or association” that was so “ardently opposed to the elected Aristide government,”⁶ Apaid is not even a Haitian citizen.⁷ But the fact that he was born in the U.S. and holds an American passport is not the least attractive of his qualifications for representing Haiti's largely-destitute, black population. Unlike most Haitians, Apaid is not descended from African slaves. In fact, being of Syrian heritage, he hails from the “large middle eastern segment of the Haitian elite.”⁸

It is not difficult to understand Apaid's virulent hatred of all things Aristide. Advocacy for the poor was not his strongpoint. The Apaid family's business empire—Alpha Industries—is the biggest sweat-shop operator in Haiti, with 15 or 16 garment-assembly plants,⁹ where workers sew clothing for such profitable foreign firms as Canada's Gildan Activewear. Since his factories reportedly paid only a paltry, wage-slave salary of as little as “68 cents a day” at the time of the 2004 coup,¹⁰ it was no wonder that Apaid so feverishly opposed Aristide's increases to the minimum wage.

The Apaid empire also includes Alpha Electronics, a components exporter to U.S. war industries like Sperry/Unisys, IBM, Remington and Honeywell for use in radar and sonar.¹¹

The family patriarch—André Apaid, Sr., founder of Alpha Sewing in



Reginald Boulos

the 1970s—was “close to dictator ‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier.” Apaid Jr. followed “the political footsteps of his father” who had led a so-called

“‘civil society’ campaign to support the 1991-1994 military coup against President Aristide which successfully eased U.S. sanctions on the export of goods from Haiti's assembly sweat-shops.”¹²

Apaid Sr. was “one of the chief lobbyists in the U.S.”¹³ for the military junta that ousted Aristide eight months after his first landslide election in 1990.

Despite all this, the National Commission for Haitian Rights—Haiti (see pp.3-32) described Apaid as “the public voice behind” the G184, “as well as its best salesperson.”¹⁴

Reginald Boulos

The other most frequently quoted mouthpiece for the G184, was Reginald Boulos. Like Apaid, his credentials would appear to make him less than desirable as a candidate to represent Haiti's populace. For one thing, Boulos—like Apaid—is a multi-millionaire of middle-eastern, not African, heritage. What's more, Pharval Labs—the pharmaceutical company he leads—is infamous throughout Haiti for having sold a poisonous, cough syrup that killed 88 children in 1996 when it was “distributed throughout poor neighborhoods of the capital.”¹⁵ Distributing Pharval's deadly product in poor Port-au-Prince areas was the Caribbean Canadian Chemical Company.¹⁶

Another incident “victimizing innocent Haitian children and implicating Dr. Reginald Boulos,” occurred in the early 1990s when more than 2,000 babies in Cité Soleil, a dirt-poor Port-au-Prince area, were given an experimental measles vaccine up to “500 times” stronger than “normal.” This “U.S. government test” was conducted by the U.S.-funded Centres pour le Développement et la Santé (CDS), which Boulos then headed.¹⁷ The result was a “higher than expected death rate,” though “how many Haitian babies died as a result” is unknown.¹⁸

This was not the only time that Boulos’ CDS used the dirt-poor people of Cité Soleil as medical guinea pigs. Many women in this pro-Aristide area “suffered extremely severe side effects”¹⁹ when, “without...informed consent,” CDS used them to test a subdermal contraceptive called Norplant.²⁰

Such willingness on the part of this Boulos-led organization to repeatedly sacrifice the health of impoverished Haitians did not prevent him from leading the Haitian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, one of the most prestigious members of the G184.

In September 2005, Boulos was among a handful of Haitian business and coup-regime officials flown in for a meeting at the government’s Meech Lake resort near Ottawa. These hand-picked Haitians, who Joe Clark described as “really excellent people,”²¹ met with a dozen bankers, 15 top CIDA bureaucrats and Foreign Affairs officials, and representatives from agencies funded by the U.S. and Canadian governments. On the agenda were such controversial topics as the privatization of Haiti’s publicly-owned resources.²²

Media complicity

One would think that their backgrounds would invalidate Apaid and Boulos from becoming leaders of a supposedly popular, neutral “civil society” organization—like the G184—which loudly proclaimed its neutrality in trying to bridge the political chasm between Haiti’s rich and poor. However, with tremendous hubris, they pushed aside their blatantly obvious, image problems and became—with incredible panache—media darlings for the G184.

This preposterous affront was

only conceivable thanks to wondrous personality makeovers staged by the Haiti’s corporate media and by the G184’s allies abroad. Because they received consistently favourable news coverage, the gulf between their elitist agenda and the will of Haiti’s poor citizenry was maliciously ignored.

The G184’s membership included several large media groups, like the Haitian National Media Association,²³ which brought together “the owners of the largest Haitian commercial media stations in Port-au-Prince” to “combat the dictatorship” of President Aristide.²⁴ As such, Haiti’s media was never likely to expose the major lies told by this phony grassroots organization. Likewise, with all the complimentary sound bites about the G184 emanating from their cheerleaders, coaches and corporate sponsors in foreign governments, the leadership of Apaid and Boulos was rarely questioned abroad either. If anything, the G184 was constantly being egged on by the media, both at home and abroad, to take their anti-Aristide struggle to its ultimate conclusion.

Indeed, Apaid, Boulos and their cronies in the G184 could never have fanned the flames of class hatred against Haiti’s poor, or set the stage for the 2004 coup, without such unrelenting media support. Whenever they spoke at a G184-sponsored protest or fired off missives denouncing Aristide as an insane dictator, they were sure to garner the most positive media results that money could buy.

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PAPDA:

CIDA's "Alternative Development" includes Coups and Political Repression

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

A coalition of Haitian development groups called Plateforme Haitienne de Plaidoyer pour un Developpement Alternatif (PAPDA) — Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development — is “one of the generously-funded NGO’s in Haiti.”¹ PAPDA says that it “collaborates closely”² with Haitian organizations like the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR). PAPDA, like NCHR, was among the strongest supporters of the coup and the brutal regime that it empowered.

PAPDA has close collaborators in Canada as well. It is listed as one of the two “partner” organizations in Haiti of an influential Montreal-based group called Alternatives. During the lead up to the 2004 coup, this largely CIDA-funded group also distinguished itself in the eyes of Canada’s government by strongly supporting efforts to rid Haiti of its elected government. Then, following the 2004 coup, Alternatives did extensive public relations work which covered up the human rights disaster that resulted. The Alternatives’ website lists Camille Chalmers, the president of PAPDA, as the only foreign member of their board of directors.³

Prior to the 2004 coup, PAPDA was among the Haitian organizations that helped mobilize Haitian opposition to President Aristide’s Lavalas government. As Haiti’s powerful, elite-led “civil society” groups gathered steam, PAPDA increased the hyperbole of its public statements. For example, by late January 2004, just weeks before Haiti’s president was kidnapped by U.S. Marines, a media release from PAPDA referred to Aristide’s government as a “dictatorship” and repeatedly “demanded” his “immediate resignation.”⁴

This PAPDA statement was signed by two of its top representatives, Yves André Wainright and Camille Chalmers. When Aristide was deposed in 2004, the regime that took power quickly handpicked Wainright as its Environment Minister.⁵ The fact that the regime would select Wainright for this



Camille Chalmers, Executive Secretary of PAPDA

role, and that he would accept a cabinet position in this unconstitutional government, sheds light on PAPDA’s complicity in the illegal regime change.

When Chalmers made “a lengthy presentation” at the 2006 World Social Forum in Venezuela, he expressed his opposition to Aristide, and offered “a general but vague criticism of neoliberalism.” However, Chalmers “made no mention of the human rights situation,” the persecution of Lavalas supporters by the coup government or the many political prisoners in the country.⁶ For this whitewash of the crisis in Haiti, Chalmers was then confronted by Canadian activists from the Canada Haiti Action Network (CHAN). Chalmers denied their statements that PAPDA had received funds from the Canadian government. In fact, he

claimed that PAPDA does not

“receive any funding from any foreign governments. CHAN activists reiterated the connection between CIDA funds that go to Canadian NGOs that are specifically earmarked for organizations like his. He would not concede the point, even though, as it was pointed out, he was flown to Canada by one of these organizations to legitimize Canada’s role in the occupation which he claims to be opposed to.”⁷

However, Chalmers’ denials don’t necessarily mean very much. As CHAN pointed out, he could not acknowledge “the actual nature of the military occupation,” or “bring himself to denounce the repression.” Nor could he “affirm the high number of Lavalas political prisoners.”⁸



The 2004 coup-installed regime amply rewarded Yves André Wainright for his hard work within PAPDA where he had denounced the elected Lavalas government as a “dictatorship” and demanded President Aristide’s “immediate resignation.” Once the Lavalas government was illegally ousted and replaced in 2004, Wainright was made Minister of the Environment.



Marguerite Laurent, founder and chair of the Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network, is a playwright, poet and entertainment-business attorney. She has described PAPDA as one of the key "so-called progressives" that "so maligned the Aristide government it is not an exaggeration to say they actively participated in bringing on the coup d'etat." Laurent says PAPDA "was bought" and "should be made accountable for the great suffering of the Haitian people."

PAPDA's diligent pre-coup propaganda work led CHAN activist and journalist Anthony Fenton to contend that PAPDA "contribute[d] greatly to the demonization of Aristide, which culminated in his removal."⁹

Similarly, Marguerite Laurent, the founder and chair of the Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network, has described PAPDA as one of the key "so-called progressives" that "so maligned the Aristide government, it is not an exaggeration to say they actively participated in bringing on the Coup D'etat." She argues that PAPDA "should be made accountable for the great suffering of the Haitian people" under the 2004 coup regime. And, referring to PAPDA's foreign funding, Laurent has asserted: "They were bought. Their constituencies are mainly foreigners, not Haitians... They are still playing to their foreign constituency."¹⁰

PAPDA's foreign funding base and its foreign constituency were also raised in "Talk Left, Funded Right," an article that noted PAPDA's corresponding lack of popular support within Haiti: "[M]ost 'well-educated' critics of Aristide and Lavalas share similar values and priorities, and suffer from similar limitations. Their lack of any popular appeal, their reluctance to work in the neighbourhoods where most people live, their contempt for what they call 'populism,' deprives them of any significant political strength. The left-leaning critics of

Aristide and Lavalas who work for media-friendly and foreign donor-friendly groups like PAPDA...are now regularly cited as 'alternative' voices in the international press, but when they hold a sit-in or demonstration..., perhaps fifty to a hundred people are likely to attend."¹⁰

To such meagre but well-funded protests—organized by Canadian-supported groups like PAPDA—we must compare the peaceful rallies attended by tens of thousands of pro-democracy supporters. The groups that have organized such mass protests—demanding the return of their president from forced exile—would, of course, never receive a cent from the Canadian government, which after all played a central role in the illegal removal of Aristide and his entire, legitimate government.

So, the elite-run, anti-Aristide movement received millions in CIDA-

funding, but could never draw huge crowds to their marches, or to the ballot boxes. On the other hand, pro-Aristide voters have organized themselves and won two landslide elections without foreign funding. They are the Western-hemisphere's poorest of the poor. What's more, at their pro-democracy protests during the coup period, these brave souls repeatedly faced deadly hails of bullets fired by Haiti's RCMP-trained, CIDA-funded police.

Such is the difference between Haiti's pro- and anti-Aristide forces. They are worlds apart.

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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:

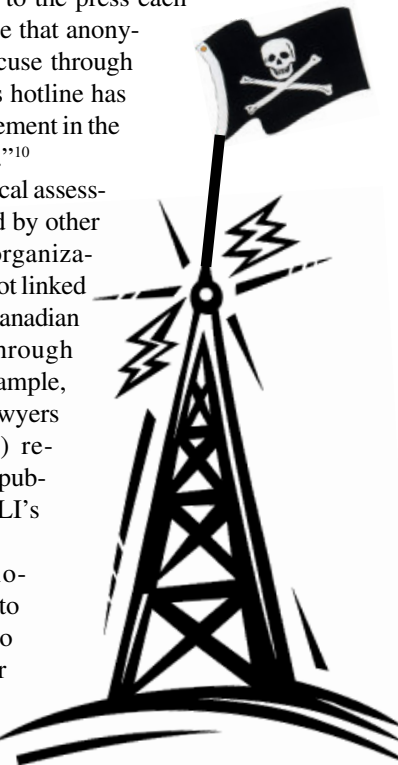
"We demand that Temporary Protective Status be granted to all Haitians facing political persecution, including those whose names are read daily on Haitian radio stations."¹³

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.”

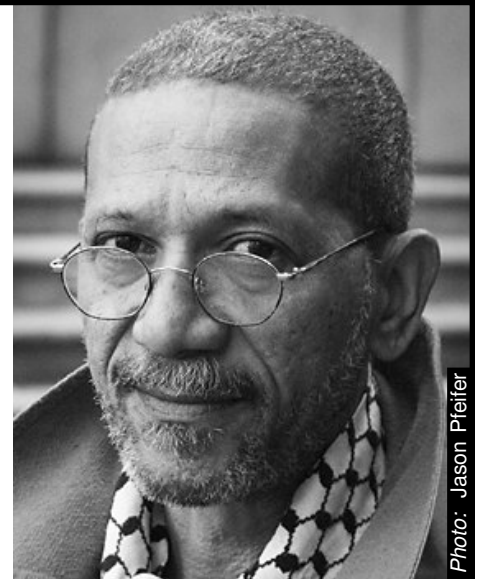


Photo: Jason Pfeifer

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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CONAP and ENFOFANM: CIDA funds the “REAL Women” of Haiti

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

Haiti's National Coordination for Advocacy on Women's Rights (CONAP) and ENFOFANM (Women's info) are two stridently anti-Aristide women's organizations—funded by CIDA—that actively participated in destabilizing the popularly-elected Lavalas government. Even after the coup, when Aristide supporters were being persecuted with impunity, these organizations kept firing off virulent press statements blaming Lavalas for Haiti's ills. This helped to successfully draw attention away from the foreign-backed regime's brutal witch-hunt against pro-democracy supporters.

One of the key officials of both CONAP and ENFOFANM, Danielle Magloire, played a central role in selecting Haiti's illegal junta, thereby giving it a veneer of legitimacy. Within days of Aristide's kidnapping, a “Tripartite Council”—representing Aristide's domestic and foreign opponents—chose what they called a “Council of Sages.” This hand-picked group of seven “wise” Haitians, including Magloire, appointed long-time Flor-ida resident Gérard Latortue as “interim” prime minister. He selected a cabinet¹ which dismantled the country's entire democratically elected government.

Co-authors of *Canada in Haiti*, Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton, have remarked that Magloire's

“status as a ‘wise’ person came largely from her positions at ENFOFANM ...and CONAP, ...which were/are CIDA-funded feminist organizations that would not have grown to prominence without international funding.”²

After thus playing midwife to the coup regime, Magloire and fellow appointees to the “Council of Sages” continued to advise their illegal spawn: “On July 16, [2005,] the Council of Sages, the Western-backed body that has overseen Haiti's political affairs since the February 2004 ouster of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, made a startling recommendation. Blaming the exiled Aristide and his

Lavalas party for ‘continu[ing] to promote and tolerate violence,’ the council urged the interim regime that it appointed to ‘make the bold political and beneficial decision to disqualify the Lavalas Family Party from the electoral process.’”³

This was remarkably elitist and antidemocratic counsel since Lavalas was by far the most widely-supported political party in Haiti. Furthermore, it was exactly the kind of sage advice one could expect from CONAP which

“took a leadership role among civil society organizations mobilizing against Aristide that created the climate that made it possible for the Americans to come into Haiti.”⁴

When asked why CONAP began organizing to rid Haiti of Aristide, Peggy Antrobus, the past general coordinator of a Third-World feminist network—Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era—explained that “it comes back to class. In my opinion, they represent the privilege[d] few.”⁵

Engler and Fenton reached the same conclusion saying CONAP is

“a virulently anti-Lavalas feminist organization that has shunned the language of class struggle in a country where a tiny percent of the population own nearly everything.”⁶

Tom Reeves—a U.S. professor who organized nine delegations to Haiti during the 1991-1994 coup period—also critiqued CONAP and ENFOFANM, saying that “based on their record and the evidence of their growing lack of connection to the base,” they and other CIDA-funded Haitian elite groups, such as NCHR-Haiti, PAPDA and SOFA—“do not represent the poor people of Haiti.” He points out that in April 2004, “ignoring the massive wave of repression against Lavalas,” these privileged groups rallied to demand “the immediate arrest of... Aristide officials.”⁷ (See “QC Denounces NCHR-Haiti,” p.8.)

Such partisan politics typifies the CONAP coalition, which includes ENFOFANM and at least two CIDA-funded members of the G-184—SOFA and Fanm Yo La. (See p.39.) On February 2, 2004, CONAP issued a hyperbolic



CONAP and ENFOFANM played major roles in creating the political climate that ousted Aristide's government. Then, a top official in both organizations, Danielle Magloire, was hand-picked for the so-called “Council of Sages,” which had the dubious honour of choosing the dictatorship's prime minister.

diatribe accusing the “Lavalas Government and Mr. Aristide of treason against the Haitian people.” Claiming that “Aristide has built an apparatus of state terrorism,” CONAP ominously declared that the “Lavalas government is at war with the Haitian people.”⁸ Three days later, U.S.-armed rebels began their terror campaign which created a pretext for the foreign invasion and the coup.

CONAP also revealed its class bias by using the slur *chimère* to invoke the spectre of the Haitian elite's favourite bogeyman.⁹ (See “*Chimère*: The ‘N’ word of Haiti,” pp.50-51.)

A week after the U.S., Canadian and French troops finalized the coup process, CONAP announced it was “celebrating” the “victory” of Aristide's “resignation” and bragged of its leading role in his government's demise:

“In October 2003, women's organizations led by CONAP denounced the Lavalas regime and labeled it an outlaw and rogue regime. The notion of an outlaw regime, devoid of legitimacy and authority to act on behalf

of the Haitian people, was then appropriated by a broad coalition of other civil society actors in Haiti.”¹⁰

Although this supposedly “broad coalition” was largely funded and led by foreign governments—and egged on by most regressive forces of Haiti’s business elite—and although its efforts paved the way for an unconstitutional regime change, CONAP professed that it was “a major contribution to democracy in Haiti.”

These self-serving celebrations of Haiti’s 2004 coup are found in CONAP’s vitriolic response to what it called a “fallacious and racist” declaration against the coup. CONAP’s outlandish statement said it was “shocked and outraged” at a declaration signed by dozens of feminists, called “Caribbean Women Denounce the U.S.-backed coup in Haiti.”¹¹ One of those who signed this denunciation of the 2004 coup was the aforementioned Peggy Antrobus. In an interview called “Race, gender and class: Why a group of Caribbean women have spoken out against the coup in Haiti,” she discussed some key lessons to be learned from CONAP’s role in the coup:

“This...highlighted for me how vulnerable civil society organizations are to political manipulation. Although I...understand civil society...includes very right-winged people, I never understood how vulnerable civil society is to political manipulation....

“Many...NGOs...involved in the anti-Aristide mobilization have been getting a lot of U.S. government money.... (It is not just the Americans that do this....) This trend is very disconcerting because many...women’s organizations depend on funding from government.... [I]t is very problematic...we really need to be alert to... how easily we can be co-opted....

“If women’s organizations in Haiti want to break out of CONAP because they see the American’s intentions, it would be very difficult.... They would be threatened in all sorts of ways. Taking away their money would be the simplest thing, but... there are all sorts of ways to destroy people and organizations.”¹²

Despite the extremely partisan roles played by CONAP and ENFOFANM—or more likely, *because* of their

Among its “partners” in Haiti, a Canadian government agency (Rights & Democracy), still lists: CONAP, Forum Citoyen, POHDH and RNDDH (formerly called NCHR-Haiti)

anti-Lavalas biases—these organizations enjoyed the perquisites of “partnering” with the Canadian government:

“Both CONAP and ENFOFANM received substantial funding from CIDA during the years 2000-2004, along with numerous other anti-Lavalas political organizations, despite the fact that Haiti’s government was under an aid embargo.”¹³

For example, ENFOFANM received at least two Canadian government grants totalling \$141,944.¹⁴

And, in 2005, with the illegal coup regime firmly in place, Canada began a \$415,000 CIDA-funded project in Haiti, administered through Rights and Democracy (R&D), an agency created by Canada’s parliament. This project, run by CONAP and another anti-Aristide group, the Forum citoyen,¹⁵ was, paradoxically, supposed to

“support Haitian civil society organizations in their efforts to identify and initiate strategies for ensuring Haiti’s democratic development takes their interests into account.”¹⁶

During the coup regime, CIDA-funded aid groups in Canada flew Magloire and NCHR-Haiti’s Yolene Gilles (see pp.14-15,17) to Ottawa and Montreal where they promoted the government’s pro-coup propaganda.¹⁷

Through R&D, the Canadian government is still proudly partnered with CONAP. Speaking of CONAP and the Forum citoyen, R&D’s president, Jean-Louis Roy, said his agency was:

“joining efforts with these organizations to determine the most effective methods of intervention and advocacy in the current Haitian context. Our long-term goal is to help them assess and structure their experiences ...to create...training programs that promote all human rights.”¹⁸

Demolishing an elected government and then imposing a brutal coup regime is indeed a strange way to train groups how to promote democracy and human rights. With the help of partners like CONAP and ENFOFANM, the Canadian government is learning to perfect such Orwellian regime changes.

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Afterword: *Chimère*, the “N” word of Haiti

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

Some words are a political litmus test. One example is the slang term *chimère*. This is the “N” word of Haiti. It is used there today in much the same way that the word “nigger” was used 50 years ago in the U.S.

Chimère is an insulting invective that expresses utter contempt and hostility for people of a certain colour, class and political persuasion. Using it can amount to a verbal hate crime; it expresses and incites malice and hostility against an identifiable group.

This swear word—whose original meaning is usually translated as “monster” or “ghost”—is an aspersion or vilification that dehumanizes Haiti’s desperately poor, black citizens. It stigmatizes the destitute as villains.¹

But this derogatory term is more than just a cheap shot or a rude put-down against members of Haiti’s impoverished majority. This invective is hurled like a projectile against poor young black men who live in some of the world’s most wretched “slums.”

Chimère is also a verbal brickbat with a sharp political edge that has been used to inflict harm upon fans of Haiti’s deposed president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In particular, the term is wielded to smear and defame supporters of the elected Lavalas government, especially those who dared to stand up for democracy during and after the 2004 coup. In other words, it is used to debase and vilify pro-democracy advocates who suffered the horrors of the coup’s reign of terror. It also maligns, in one fell swoop, all of their friends, families and neighbours.

But *chimère* packs even more to its wicked punch. This reproachful curse slanders with connotations of brutally violent and criminal gang activity. It insinuates that all youthful Aristide supporters are actually vicious and delinquent hoodlums and thugs.

Chimère is therefore a sophisticated verbal assault against the poor—a readily accessible linguistic weapon in the propagandist’s toolkit. By hurling this obloquy, insult is added to injury, and the poor are blamed for the

horrific persecution that they are forced to suffer for supporting a government that they elected.

During the coup regime’s rampage, *chimère* was a poisonous mark used to identify people for abuse. Once scarred with this opprobrium, innocents were targeted for imprisonment, torture and even execution. Many went into hiding when fingered with this epithet.

Who uses this loaded word?

Users of the term *chimère* reveal more about their own biases than about the subjects of their abuse. It is therefore a useful exercise to examine who unthinkingly throws this word around.

Not surprisingly, the U.S. government agencies that coordinated the 2004 coup—such as the State Department,² the U.S. Agency for International Development³ and the military⁴—all embraced the pejorative label.

They acquired the term from their clients among Haiti’s wealthy elite. Fronting for this class was the notorious Group of 184. In a letter to then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, this CIDA-funded paragon of Haiti’s lofty establishment, equated their country’s elected president with terrorism, saying:

“[The] U.S. has had a firm no-dialogue policy in dealing with terrorists; it is therefore unthinkable to us that the U.S. Government expects our members to enter into a dialogue with Jean Bertrand Aristide who has unleashed his ‘*chimères*’ (thugs) against fellow countrymen.”⁵

The coup-regime’s prime minister, Gérard Latortue, did not shy away from employing the term. Although he “denied that partisans of Fanmi Lavalas are being persecuted, he reasserted the determination of his government to fight those he labels ‘*chimère*.’ He is reported saying his priority is arresting ‘*chimère*,’ rather than convicted, rights violators still at large. He said the government will not direct its attention to cases of convicted violators until this task has been completed.”⁶

The Latortue regime’s priorities were clear. Not only did they prefer jailing pro-democracy supporters to tracking down convicted criminals, they

weren’t even about to pursue the rebel leaders whose forces had released so many human rights violators from Haitian prisons in February 2004. In fact, Latortue publicly praised the rebels’ leadership, calling them “freedom fighters,” while David Lee, Canada’s ambassador to the Organization of American States, “nodded his head in approval.”⁷

The contorted views of Latortue’s Canadian-backed regime were widely propagated thanks to the G184 whose leaders and members owned and controlled most of Haiti’s major media. And, as U.S. lawyer and human rights investigator, Brian Concannon, Jr., has commented, Haiti’s right-wing press helped transform the meaning of *chimère* to suit the needs of the elite during the pre-coup period:

“Lavalas opponents...decline to distinguish between political dissidents and suspected common criminals.... This...is exemplified by use of the word *chimère*.... It was traditionally applied to brutal criminals in Haiti, but in the lead-up to the 2004 coup d’état, its usage was expanded to include any member of the urban poor who demonstrated in the streets or joined Lavalas. The anti-Lavalas press routinely refers to political prisoners—with no documented history of violence or criminal activity—as ‘gang leaders,’ or links them, with no evidence, to gang activity.”⁸

And, as another U.S. lawyer, Thomas Griffin, noted in his landmark human rights report in 2004, “hardly any young men (from pre-adolescent youngsters to men in their thirties),” from the “extremely poor sections of Port-au-Prince,” leave their neighbourhoods “for fear of being arrested as a *chimère*, the derogatory label given to them by the pro-government media.”⁹

One of worst abusers of the term *chimère* was the National Coalition for Haitian Rights–Haiti (NCHR–Haiti). This elitist, Haitian organization—funded largely by the U.S., Canadian and French governments—liberally sprinkled its reports with exaggerated and fabricated stories of the evil *chimère* bogeymen, who lurked in the dark shadows of the country’s poorest neighbourhoods (where NCHR–Haiti

officials were not welcome and therefore refused to venture). Even after the 2004 coup, when so many impoverished Haitians were being terrorized for supporting the ousted Lavalas government, NCHR-Haiti “continued to cite abuses by ‘*chimère*,’ whom they call simply ‘Aristide gangs,’ without documenting the connections.”¹⁰

NCHR-Haiti’s partisan views were taken by Amnesty International (AI) which also mimicked its reprehensible use of the term *chimère*. Kevin Pina, a U.S. journalist and long-time Haitian resident, explains that AI was “unresponsive to the situation in Haiti by virtue of their reliance on a partisan anti-Lavalas organization.... the National Coalition for Haitian Rights or NCHR who were the same ones falsely accusing people of crimes to justify their killing.... NCHR served as a network of rubber-stamp police informants for the interim regime of Gérard Latortue. They manufactured evidence of crimes to justify...locking them up—without ever having an honest trial....

“AI...went so far as to use the same language as NCHR to describe the situation. They used the word *chimère*...to describe armed groups they claimed were loyal to Aristide and the Lavalas movement. This word is a highly-partisan term used by those who supported Aristide’s ouster, especially NCHR, to create a climate of terror and fear after February 2004. Anyone accused of being a *chimère* was marked for death or imprisonment without trial. Yet here was AI, a purportedly independent human rights organization, using the same politically-charged language. I found it disgraceful.”¹¹

AI was not the only organization that shamelessly followed NCHR-Haiti’s political and linguistic lead. Although supposedly concerned with democracy, human rights and the dispensation of charity to Haiti’s impoverished masses, several Canadian groups spread NCHR-Haiti disinformation and thus helped prepare public support for the coup that deposed Aristide’s elected government. Then, ignoring the coup’s illegality, they covered up the many atrocities that followed.

Just three weeks after the coup,

during a firestorm of human rights abuses in Haiti, Canadian organizations spouted the NCHR’s perverted brand of anti-Lavalas rhetoric to welcoming ears on Parliament Hill. Addressing the Foreign Affairs committee, top officials of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Oxfam-Quebec and the International Center for Legal Resources invoked the dreaded *chimère* bogey monster a dozen times.¹² And, like others who habitually used this slang, they studiously avoided the reality that Aristide had been kidnapped. They also denied that a Canadian-backed coup had just overthrown Haiti’s democracy. What’s more, their analysis neglected to mention the thousands of Lavalas supporters then being raped, jailed, exiled or killed by the regime that Canada’s government was so proudly supporting in Haiti.

Leading Canadian government apologists for the 2004 coup also threw around the *chimère* epithet. They included Liberal MP Denis Coderre, who was Prime Minister Paul Martin’s “special advisor on Haiti.” On CBC radio, Coderre—with his typical eloquence—blurted out a slander equating *chimère* with the whole of Lavalas, a mass movement cum political party which—having won two landslide elections—put Canada’s Liberal Party to shame:

“[T]he minute I became Minister for La Francophonie in December 2003, the dean of the University [in Haiti] through the *chimère* – Lavalas, the armed force of Mr. Aristide, break the two legs of the dean.... We were not there to make Mr. Aristide out. He left and I don’t know what the history will tell how that it happened, but Canada was not involved in there but Mr. Aristide make a pretty bad thing in Haiti.”¹³

And then there is Claude Boucher, Canada’s ambassador to Haiti during most of the coup period. During a CPAC TV presentation, in which he admitted working with Haiti’s top rebel leaders (including Guy Philippe), Boucher also blurted out the invective “*chimère*.”¹⁴

Considering the sheer audacity of the Canadian government’s violent affront against Haitian democracy and human rights, we should not be surprised that its top officials would also stoop to vicious name-calling as well.

Sticks and stones do break bones, but sometimes names too can hurt.

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