

SOLIDARITY AND EFFECTIVE AID STILL URGENTLY NEEDED IN HAITI

The big powers in Washington, Ottawa, and Paris cannot be trusted with Haiti's future.

The *Canada Haiti Action Network* (CHAN) encourages Canadians to make sure their country's aid reflects genuine solidarity and social justice through:

- ❖ **Awareness:** Understanding that Haiti is now the largest recipient of Canadian government aid – but most of that aid is spent on police and prisons, not social development.
- ❖ **Pressure:** Urging Members of Parliament must join their counterparts in the U.S. Congress who have critically examined Western policies in Haiti.
- ❖ **Solidarity:** Supporting social projects that bring meaningful progress to Haiti (e.g., medical organizations such as *Partners In Health* and human rights groups such as the *Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti*).
- ❖ **Partnerships:** Partnering Canadian trade unions, faith organizations, and medical and education institutions with their counterparts in Haiti.

Statement by Haiti Solidarity BC (CHAN Affiliate), June 16, 2011

A profound humanitarian crisis prevails in Haiti, eighteen months following the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. Hundreds of thousands of people still live in makeshift camps lacking adequate health services, sanitation, and potable water. Sexual assaults of female camp residents are widespread and many children have no schools to attend.

Canadians donated tens of millions of dollars to Haiti in the weeks and months following the earthquake. Large matching funds were donated to aid agencies by the Canadian government. But delivery of assistance has been grossly inadequate, and reconstruction has barely begun. According to a Canadian Red Cross spokesperson speaking to Parliament on February 28, 2011, the world must expect a delay of five years before every victim displaced by the earthquake can expect to receive minimal shelter.

Although the physical tasks of reconstruction are enormous, the larger obstacles facing Haitians are political. The *Canada Haiti Action Network* (CHAN) believes that inadequate aid to Haiti is rooted in international policies towards the country and its government. For years, the governments of the U.S., Canada and Europe have deliberately thwarted the sovereignty and social justice aspirations of the Haitian people.

Long before the earthquake, Haiti was dubbed the ‘Republic of NGOs’. The NGO model channels aid and assistance through foreign-run organizations, rather than Haitian government ministries or civil society institutions. The net effect is to exclude Haitians from decision-making and a failure to build lasting improvements or Haitian capacity through training and long-term employment. Haitian members of the *Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission* (IHRC) have voiced deep dissatisfaction with the exclusion of Haitians from post-earthquake reconstruction.

The exclusion of Haitians from development projects is mirrored in the political sphere. The recent two-round election was marked by foreign pressure and interference. Haiti’s largest political party, the Fanmi Lavalas of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was, once again, ruled off the ballot. Under further pressure from the U.S. government and OAS, presidential candidate Jude Célestin was tossed off the second round ballot even though Haiti’s electoral commission ruled that he won more votes than third place finisher Michel Martelly.

Recent WikiLeaks revelations make clear the extent of U.S. meddling in Haiti, and that the U.S. government harbours a grudge against outgoing President René Préval for joining Haiti to Venezuela’s Petrocaribe initiative in 2007. Préval sponsored Célestin’s candidacy. The end result was an election that landed Michel Martelly, a rightist and associate of anti-democratic militarists and Duvalierists, in the Haitian presidency.

These latest electoral exclusions cap an eleven-year effort by the big powers of the world to stifle democracy in Haiti. A U.S.-led embargo of aid and development funds began in the year 2000, intended to destabilize Haiti’s government. It escalated to the overthrow and exile of President Aristide and the dissolution of Haiti’s senate and legislature on February 29, 2004. Today, Haiti is the only militarily-occupied country in the Western Hemisphere, with nearly 13,000, UN Security Council-sponsored police and soldiers.

Brief History of Haiti and Canada

Revolution (1791 – 1804): Haitians stage first successful slave revolt in world history.

U.S. occupation (1915-1934): U.S. marines occupy Haiti.

Dictatorship (1957-1986): Family tyranny of Francois Duvalier, then son Jean Claude Duvalier, rule Haiti.

Rebellion (1986) Popular uprising overthrows the Duvalier dictatorship.

Democracy (1990): First free and democratic elections; Jean-Bertrand Aristide elected president.

Military coup (1991-94): Haitian military overthrows the Aristide government, thousands killed.

Restoration (1994-2000): Aristide returns to Haiti; democratic transition of power to President René Préval; Haitian military is dissolved.

Punishment (2000-2004): Aristide re-elected under Fanmi Lavalas banner; U.S., Canada and France implement an embargo of aid to the government.

Coup d'état (2004-2006): Aristide overthrown by foreign-backed militias and U.S. troops. 800 Canadian soldiers dispatched to back the overthrow. Violent repression by an illegal coup regime follows.

Exclusion (2006-2011): Elections held in 2006 with de facto exclusion of Aristides's party, Fanmi Lavalas. The party is banned from all subsequent elections.

For information on Haiti, including how to contact projects you can support and other ways to get involved, consult the CHAN website www.canadahaitiaction.ca.

To invite representatives of CHAN in cities across Canada to speak, contact a committee in your area. You can e-mail canadahaiti@gmail.com or phone (in Vancouver) 778 858 5179.