

Haiti: A Movement of Solidarity to End the UN's Illegal Occupation

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"From the beginning of our century until now, Haiti and its inhabitants under one aspect or another, have, for various reasons, been very much in the thoughts of the American people. While slavery existed amongst us, her example was a sharp thorn in our side and a source of alarm and terror.... Her very name was pronounced with a shudder." – Frederick Douglass, World's Columbian Exposition, January 2, 1893

We are no longer living in the 19th century with the spectre of Haiti's successful struggle for its freedom haunting the consciousness of slave masters across the Americas. Yet the military occupation of this country since 2004 by way of the [United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti](#) (MINUSTAH) is sending a clear message that the Haitians' tentative step toward exercising control over the destiny in the 1990s and the early years of the new century is still "a source of alarm and terror" to [imperial overlords](#) such as Canada, France, and the United States.

The MINUSTAH occupation army has a combined force of 7,408 soldiers and police personnel as of July 31, 2014. This armed entity has served as the muscle behind the schemes of the local elite and foreign interests in preventing the disenfranchised urban and rural labouring classes from seeking to capture the levers of national political, economic, and social power.

A number of observers have documented the oppressive actions of MINUSTAH in its ten-year occupation of Haiti: involvement [in the sexual exploitation and abuse](#) of girls and women; [repression](#) of Jean-Bertrand Aristides' supporters; the general abuses of [living under occupation](#); [introduction of cholera](#) that has killed over 8,500 Haitians and infected more than 700,000 people; the [suspicious death](#) of a teenager; and the compelling reasons for an [end to the occupation](#).

It is high time for progressive people and organizations in Canada, Europe and the United States to demonstrate their anti-imperialist commitment to Haiti by creating campaigns and a movement to organize and mobilize mass opinion against the military occupation. The current mandate of MINUSTAH ends on October 15, 2014, and it is up for renewal at the anti-democratic UN's Security Council. Therefore, we need to be nimble and swift in putting together initiatives demanding an immediate withdrawal of the UN's army of occupation.

Further, individuals and groups of good conscience need to develop people-to-people relations with Haitian grassroots organizations in their struggle to control their destiny and fight local and global forces of capitalism and imperialism. There are [a number of initiatives](#) that may be pursued in exercising solidarity with the labouring classes in Haiti.

Haiti is a symbol of the Revolutionary Afrikan Tradition that is committed to an assertive anti-imperialist politics. The present occupation of this country by MINUSTAH/United Nations is an attempt to prevent the Haitians from building on their history of militant self-determination. We are morally and politically obligated to build campaigns across the Americas and the rest of the world to demand an end to the occupation of Haiti.

The labouring classes in Haiti have furnished the world with one of the most compelling and dramatic moments in revolution-making in the annals of history. They are the first and only people to have successfully overthrown a system of enslavement through armed struggle.

They defeated the armies of France, Britain, and Spain, which were among the strongest military powers during that period. Haiti lit the fire of freedom in the hearts and minds of enslaved Afrikans and colonized peoples across the Americas. The people of Haiti weren't comfortable in just being role models for people who sought their emancipation by all available means.

They gave guns, ammunition, ships, and personnel to Simon Bolivar and his fledgling, resource-challenged campaign to [liberate Latin America](#) from Spanish colonialism. The Haitians in their humanistic and solidaristic commitment to Afrikan liberation extracted a promise from Bolivar to end the enslavement of Afrikans in all liberated territories under his control or influence. The peoples of the Americas have a special responsibility to be there for the people of Haiti in their resistance to MINUSTAH.

Ending the military occupation of Haiti is a popular demand of the labouring classes in Haiti as evidenced through [numerous demonstrations](#). Further, [a survey of Haitians](#) in August 2012 by students from Columbia University found that 65 per cent of respondents wanted an end to the occupation. Recent polls on Haitians' attitude toward MINUSTAH revealed that [89 per cent of them](#) have called for the withdrawal of the UN's occupation force.

While the popular sectors in Haiti are calling for the immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces, a so-called *Group of Friends of Haiti* at the United Nations is divided over the pace of the drawdown of the occupation forces. [Eleven Latin American states](#) that contribute soldiers and/or police to the occupation, are in favour of a slower pace in the reduction of MINUSTAH's personnel. The elite from these states are seemingly oblivious of Haiti's contribution to their liberation from Spain's colonization project.

However, the progressive forces among the people of Latin America have taken a transgressive stance to MINUSTAH's military presence. The popular resistance of Haitians to the occupation has inspired [a campaign by anti-imperialist forces](#) in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean that is mobilizing for the termination of the occupation. It is also calling for the payment of reparations to Haitians for the harm and violence caused to them by MINUSTAH forces over the last ten years.

Amilcar Cabral was correct in asserting in his famous [Weapon of Theory](#) presentation at the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Cuba that action and not mere words would stop imperialism in its tracks:

“We are not going to use this platform to rail against imperialism. An African saying very common in our country says: “When your house is burning, it's no use beating the tom-toms.” On a Tricontinental level, this means that we are not going to eliminate imperialism by shouting insults against it. For us, the

best or worst shout against imperialism, whatever its form, is to take up arms and fight. This is what we are doing, and this is what we will go on doing until all foreign domination of our African homelands has been totally eliminated.”

We are called upon by History to use the options available to us today to rid Haiti (and the rest of the world) of imperialism or what is now euphemistically called *globalization*. Our principled and solidaristic actions with the Haitian people will definitely speak louder than fiery rhetoric or empty platitudes to resistance or revolution from below.

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