

Haiti Needs Emergency Relief, not Military Intervention!

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Region: [Canada](#)
Theme: [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)
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A letter and petition from Canada Haiti Action Network

The Canada Haiti Action Network, working alongside colleagues in the UK and the United States, would like to announce the launch of a new petition campaign urging the reorientation of the relief effort in Haiti.

It has become increasingly clear that the immediate crisis provoked by the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti has become a pretext for the massive deployment of military forces – particularly from the US, but also from Canada. For many reasons, this is a gravely mistaken policy, hidden amidst the outpouring of genuine concern for the suffering in Haiti.

The petition proposed (copy enclosed below) is an appeal for an alternative direction for this critical humanitarian effort, one that respects Haiti's sovereignty, and directly acknowledges the need to reconcile Haiti's past in order to face the future.

We are fortunate to be able to launch this petition with an initial set of signatories, see below. We hope that CHAN list members will not only sign on to this petition but also send it via email to friends, colleagues, and email lists for which it would be appropriate. You can find the petition online at: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/relief-not-militarization-for-haiti>

A shortened version of the statement has been published in the print edition of the [The Guardian \(UK\) for January 22](#). There may be many newspapers and magazines interested in publishing this statement — we encourage submitting it to any publications that might consider it, including independent media websites. Please do post any successes in this effort to this email list.

Sincerely,

Kevin Skerrett, Ottawa Haiti Solidarity
Roger Annis, Haiti Solidarity BC

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PETITION

Haiti needs emergency relief, not military intervention!

21 January 2010

We, the undersigned, are outraged by the scandalous delays in distributing essential aid to victims of the earthquake in Haiti. Since the US Air Force seized unilateral control of the airport in Port-au-Prince, it has privileged military over civilian humanitarian flights. As a result, untold numbers of people have died needlessly in the rubble of Port-au-Prince, Léogane and other abandoned towns. If aid continues to be withheld, many more preventable deaths will follow. We demand that US commanders immediately restore executive control of the relief effort to Haiti's leaders, and to help rather than replace the local officials they claim to support.

We note that obsessive foreign concerns with 'security' and 'looting' are largely refuted by actual levels of patience and solidarity on the streets of Port-au-Prince. The decision to avoid what US commanders have called 'another Somalia-type situation' by prioritizing security and military control is likely to succeed only in provoking the very kinds of unrest they condemn.

In keeping with a longstanding pattern, US and UN officials continue to treat the Haitian people and their representatives with wholly misplaced fear and suspicion. We call on the de facto rulers of Haiti to facilitate, as the reconstruction begins, the renewal of popular participation in the determination of collective priorities and decisions. We demand that they do everything possible to strengthen the capacity of the Haitian people to respond to this crisis. We demand, consequently, that they allow Haiti's most popular and most inspiring political leader, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (whose party won 90% of the parliamentary seats in the country's last round of democratic elections), to return immediately and safely from the unconstitutional exile to which he has been confined since the US, Canada and France helped depose him in 2004.

If reconstruction proceeds under the supervision of foreign troops and international development agencies it will not serve the interests of the vast majority of Haiti's population. Neoliberal forms of international 'aid' have already directly contributed to the systematic impoverishment of Haiti's people and the undermining of their government, and in both 1991 and 2004 the US intervened to overthrow the elected government and attack its supporters, with devastating effect. This is why we urgently call on the countries that dominate Haiti and the region to respect Haitian sovereignty and to initiate an immediate reorientation of international aid, away from neo-liberal adjustment, sweatshop exploitation and non-governmental charity, and towards systematic investment in Haiti's own people and government.

We demand a much greater international role for Haiti's genuine allies and supporters, including Cuba, South Africa, Venezuela, the Bahamas and other members of CARICOM. We demand that all reconstruction aid take the form of grants not loans. We demand that Haiti's remaining foreign debt be immediately forgiven, and that the money that foreign governments still owe to Haiti - notably the massive sums extorted by the French government from 1825 through to 1947 as compensation for the slaves and property France lost when Haiti won its independence - be paid in full and at once.

Above all, we demand that the reconstruction of Haiti be pursued under the guidance of one overarching objective: the political and economic empowerment of the Haitian people.

Initial signatories:

Pierre Labossiere, Haiti Action Committee (USA)

Kevin Pina, filmmaker

Noam Chomsky (MIT)

Peter Hallward, Middlesex University, UK

Jean Saint-Vil, Canada Haiti Action Network

Niraj Joshi, Canada Haiti Action Network

Brian Concannon, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti

Kevin Skerrett, Ottawa Haiti Solidarity Committee/Kozayiti

BC Holmes, Toronto Haiti Action Committee

Roger Annis, Haiti Solidarity BC

Yves Engler, Haiti Action Montreal

To sign-on to this petition/letter, please go to <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/relief-not-militarization-for-haiti>

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