

The Truth about Haiti's Suffering

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Even in its hour of utter devastation, Haiti, the western hemisphere's poorest country, teaches the rest of the world some valuable truths.

This Caribbean island nation of nine million people has right now a third of its population cut off from basic supplies of food, water, medicine or shelter. In the blink of an eye, the earthquake that hit the country has buried a capital city of three million people under rubble for which the eventual death toll may be between 100,000 and 500,000. Just like that.

Like shutting the proverbial stable door after the horse has bolted, the US and other world powers are promising to send emergency aid to Haiti. Well intentioned no doubt. But where was the aid and economic development assistance to Haiti - over half the population live on \$1 a day and 80 per cent are classed as poor - in the years before this calamity?

Haiti's poverty - as for other poor countries hit by natural disasters - leaves its people wide open to the kind of devastation that has befallen them. And make no mistake, Haiti's poverty is not just bad luck or something inherently faulty about its natural resources and people. The country has been kept underdeveloped by decades of political and economic interference from Washington to ensure that this former slave colony continues to serve as a cheap source of agricultural exports to the US and as a labour sweatshop for American corporations making textiles and other consumer goods.

While Washington spends \$1,000 billion on wars allegedly to combat the threat of terrorism, Haiti's poor - whose country's economy is valued at \$7 billion - show us a sobering perspective on what a real threat to life looks like. We live in a physical world where floods, tsunamis, earthquakes happen. These disasters claim multiple more lives than the threats that the US is fixated on and spends multiples more money on. Can you imagine how many lives could have been saved in Haiti's earthquake if a fraction of the money squandered on futile wars had been directed to economic and social development of that country?

Of course, the moral and sensible logic of that idea does not apply in a world dictated by Washington's foreign policy. This is because of the imperatives and logic of US-led capitalism, which requires countries like Haiti to be kept in a state of poverty for the sake of corporate profit and which requires the fixation on illusionary threats to cover up its need to control geopolitical resources (mainly energy). This is the true face of the economic system that Washington and its allies impose on the world. And Haiti has pulled the mask of this ugly face.

The harrowing anguish and suffering of Haiti teaches us something else. Heart-rending reports of streets filled with corpses and blood running from under rubble, children crying

for parents, parents digging with their fingers for children, the sound of dying voices pervading the darkness of night. This is the horror of hundreds of thousands of people suddenly engulfed by suffering. Some observers have compared what has happened in Haiti to the aftermath of an atom bomb being dropped. So the next time, Washington spokespeople airily float plans on Sunday morning chat shows to obliterate Iran – that other “serious threat” (meaning not serious threat) – we should remember: this is what human suffering on a massive scale looks like.

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website [Globalresearch.ca](#). He is a Master’s graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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