

Protest UN Soldiers Assault on Haitian Street Vendors

Written by Robert ID4320

Tuesday, 22 April 2008 12:53 -

On Saturday, April 11th, a little past 3 p.m., a MINUSTAH (UN) soldier, Nigerian Cpl. Nagya Aminu, was shot and killed in downtown Port-au-Prince. While this killing was widely reported in the international media, what followed the killing was not.

In the immediate aftermath of the killing, at approximately 3:30 p.m. that same afternoon, MINUSTAH troops launched a massive assault on Haitian vendors at the open-air sidewalk market near the main Cathedral in downtown Port-au-Prince—the area where the soldier had been killed.

According to many different street vendors who directly witnessed the MINUSTAH assault, four or five MINUSTAH soldiers emerged from parked trucks near the market and began smashing up the property of street vendors, setting the market on fire, setting off tear gas, and shooting directly at unarmed vendors.

According to one vendor, MINUSTAH soldiers used flame throwers to torch the stalls. He said the soldiers also grabbed hammers and began destroying property. One vendor was hit in the head by MINUSTAH soldiers with these hammers. On April 17th, he showed a member of the Haiti Action Committee and other US human rights observers a massive wound to his head and a blood soaked shirt. He lost consciousness and was taken by a friend to the St. Joseph Hospital nearby.

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Another vendor reported that he was shot in the leg by MINUSTAH soldiers and showed his wound to the delegation. He also showed his medical records from St. Joseph's Hospital where he had gone to be treated.

Vendors spoke of people killed by MINUSTAH gun fire. According to an officer of the National Association of Vendors, at least three people were shot and killed by MINUSTAH soldiers, who allegedly zipped bodies into bags and took them away. Reportedly, the families could not locate the bodies in the local morgue. A different source indicated that more people may have been killed. The Vendors Association officer also stated that several hundred vendors may have lost their property in the raid.

The National Association for the Defense of Haitian Vendors and Consumers has filed a formal complaint asking the Haitian President to take action and secure compensation for the 263 Haitian vendors whose property was reportedly destroyed by the MINUSTAH troops. Members of the association provided our human rights delegation with a full listing of the names of these vendors, what property they lost, and how much it was valued. For many of these vendors, who live in dire poverty, the loss in property is truly devastating. Additionally, the Association provided us with a list naming seven people who were injured and two killed -- AMONESE PIERRE and ANNA AINSI CONNU -- by the MINUSTAH troops.

This kind of massive assault by MINUSTAH troops on the civilian population has happened many times before, such as the notorious attack on the people of Cite Soleil on July 6th, 2005. It is time for the international human rights community to stand up in defense of the street vendors and the Haitian people.

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Take action to demand that the MINUSTAH soldiers involved in this latest outrage are prosecuted for crimes against civilians.

MINUSTAH, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, was brought into Haiti by the UN in June 2004, several months after the U.S., Canada and France forced then-President Jean Bertrand Aristide out of office and into exile. Some 9,000 military and police officers from different countries are charged with keeping the peace, but have been accused by many of targeting Aristide supporters. More than 100 U.N. soldiers have been deported from Haiti, having been accused of sexual abuse. The June 2007-July 2008 budget for the UN operation in Haiti is \$535 million.

Take action to demand that the street vendors receive full compensation for what they lost.

Contact:

UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)

Tel: 011-509-244-0650/0660

FAX: 011-509-244-9366/67

Or, Fax Office of Secretary General (New York): 212-963-4879

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President Rene Preval

Fax to 206-350-7986 (a US number) or email to avokahaiti@aol.com

Your letter will be hand-delivered to the Presidential Palace in Haiti.

Haitian Ministry of Justice

Tel: 011-509-245-0474

Contact:

Haiti Action Committee at <http://www.haitisolidarity.net>

More news & information at <http://www.haitiaction.net>