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Contents

Commentary:
Stop U.S.
Interference
Against Haiti!

Background on
the Crisis in
Haiti

Palestinian
Statement to the
International
Court of Justice

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Commentary by the Workers Party, U.S.A.

Stop U.S. Interference and Intervention Against Haiti! Support the Haitian People's Struggle for Democracy!

The U.S. government is orchestrating a monstrous plot against the Haitian people and the democratically-elected government.

The U.S. is encouraging and financing criminal, paramilitary death squads which have taken control of various areas in the north of the country. Already these gangsters are murdering government officials and social activists and attacking hospitals, schools, government offices and food warehouses to create panic amongst the population. This armed fascist movement is preparing to blockade the capital of Port-au-Prince and possibly launch an armed attack against it. To add to the chaos and panic, Bush has reinforced U.S. Coast Guard patrols and announced that all Haitians seeking refuge will be turned back. Already U.S. airlines have suspended flights out of Haiti and the Coast Guard is repatriating hundreds of Haitians picked up on the high seas.

While the U.S. government and monopoly-controlled media — in a classic disinformation cam-

paign — advertise these fascists as a “popular opposition,” Bush, Powell and company slanderously attack the elected government of President Aristide and his supporters whenever they take any action to defend the people and the constitutional rule of law in the country.

The U.S. is playing a double game. On the one hand, it is supporting the fascist elements and using them as a lever to demand that President Aristide give up power. If this scenario fails to meet U.S. objectives, the U.S. is preparing an outright invasion in the name of “preventing atrocities” and providing “humanitarian assistance.” On February 27, Bush announced that the U.S. was preparing a multinational armed force to “deliver aid” and “impose stability.” The Pentagon has also drawn up a plan to invade Haiti with several thousand marines. In other words, U.S. imperialism, as it has done elsewhere, is playing the double game of creating chaos and violence and then presenting it-

Continued on page 2

Some Background on the Crisis in Haiti

The following is excerpted from a recent article by Yifat Susskind, Associate Director of MADRE: An International Women's Human Rights Organization

A political crisis that has been brewing in Haiti since 2000 exploded during the second week of February 2004. Members of an armed movement seeking to overthrow Haiti's President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, went on a rampage in a dozen Haitian towns, killing more than 60 people. The towns remain under siege by criminal gangs led by former paramilitary members.

There is great concern for the families in these areas, since the armed vigilantes have cut road and telephone access to communities, emptied prisons and blocked convoys of food aid from reaching impoverished areas.

The blockade of food aid is particularly worrisome since, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, nearly half of all Haitians lack access to even minimum food requirements. Hospitals, schools, police stations and other government buildings have been burned and looted. Meanwhile, the US Department of Homeland Security has begun preparations for the internment of up to 50,000 Haitian refugees at the US naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, signaling that the US expects a much greater escalation of violence in Haiti.

What is the Political Backdrop to the Conflict?

The crisis dates back to a political stalemate stemming from a contested election. In 2000 — the same year that George Bush stole the US presi-

Continued on page 2

Stop U.S. Interference Against Haiti (from page 1)

self as a “peacekeeper” in order to invade a sovereign country and impose its dictate.

But the masses of Haitian people are organizing themselves against the fascist counter-revolution and against the pressure and interference of the U.S. government.

Over the past few weeks, hundreds of thousands of Haitians have marched and demonstrated in Port-au-Prince to declare their determination to defend the democratically elected government. At present, people are setting up street barricades and preparing to defend the capital from any attacks. Spokespersons for the Aristide government have de-

Background on Crisis in Haiti (from page 1)

clined U.S. interference, saying that the U.S. government is preparing another coup d’etat against Haiti.

clency — Haiti held elections for 7,500 positions nationwide. Election observers contested the winners of seven senate seats.

President Aristide balked at first, but eventually yielded and the seven senators resigned. Members of Haiti’s elite, long hostile to Aristide’s progressive economic agenda, saw the controversy as an opportunity to derail his government.

Since 2001, human rights activists and humanitarian workers in Haiti have documented numerous cases of opposition vigilantes killing government officials and bystanders in attacks on the state power station, health clinics, police stations and government vehicles. The US government did not condemn any of these killings.

In January 2004, the opposition escalated its protests. At some demonstrations, government supporters, who represent Haiti’s poorest sectors, attacked opposition activists. Only then did US Secretary of State Powell issue a one-sided condemnation of “militant Aristide supporters.”

In a country as poor as Haiti, control over the institutions of the state is one of the only sources of wealth, making national politics an arena of violent competition. Similarly, in an environment of 70 percent unemployment, the prospect of long-term work as a paramilitary fighter leads many young men to join these forces.

Who is the Opposition?

Like the so-called opposition to the Chavez government of Venezuela, Haiti’s opposition represents only a small minority (8 percent of the population according to a 2000 poll). With no chance of winning through democratic elections, they rely instead on armed violence to foment a political crisis that will lead to the fall of the government. Using their international business connections, especially ties to the corporate media, the opposition has manufactured an image of itself as the true champion of democracy in Haiti.

The gangs that have placed thousands of Haitians under siege are reportedly armed with US-made M-16s, recently sent by the US to the government of the Dominican Republic.

The gangs are directly linked to two groups financed by the Bush Administration: the right-wing Convergence for Democ-

ocracy and the pro-business Group of 184.

The Convergence is a coalition of about two dozen groups, ranging from neo-Duvalierists (named for the Duvaliers’ dictatorship that ruled Haiti from 1957-1986) to former Aristide supporters. These groups have little in common except their desire to see Aristide overthrown.

According to the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, the opposition’s “only policy goal seems to be reconstituting the army and the implementation of rigorous Structural Adjustment Programs.”

The Convergence is led by former FRAPH paramilitary leaders (including Louis Chamblain, Guy Phillipe and Jean Pierre Baptiste) who carried out the bloody 1991 coup d’etat, in which the CIA-trained and -funded FRAPH overthrew Aristide, killed 5,000 civilians and terrorized Haiti for four years.

The Convergence is supported by the Haitian elite and the leadership of the US Republican Party (through the National Endowment for Democracy and the International Republican Institute).

The Group of 184 is represented by Andy Apaid, a Duvalier supporter and US citizen who obtained a Haitian passport by fraudulently claiming to have been born in Haiti. Apaid owns 15 factories in Haiti and was the main foe of Aristide’s 2003 campaign to raise the minimum wage (which, at \$1.60 a day, was lower than what it had been 10 years earlier).

By demanding that the opposition be included in any resolution of Haiti’s political impasse, the US has greatly empowered these forces. While the opposition perpetuates Haiti’s political deadlock, the US embargo (see below) guarantees the island’s economic strangulation. Aristide’s opponents hope that these combined tactics will achieve what they cannot win through democratic elections: the ouster of Aristide....

What is the role of the US in Haiti?

The US was the main supporter of the Duvalier dictatorship. In 1986, when Haiti’s pro-democracy movement finally succeeded in overthrowing the hated dictator, he was ferried to safety by the Reagan Administration.

Only with the rise of Aristide, Haiti’s first democratically elected president, did US support shift from the Haitian leader-

Continued on page 3

Palestinian Statement (from page 4)

expected that the Palestinian people would continue to believe that peace was imminent under such circumstances? . . .

20. The suicide bombings have led to the death of 438 Israelis in Israel. Four hundred and ninety Israelis, mostly soldiers and settlers, have also been killed by other kinds of violence. In contrast, since September 2000 and as of 18 February 2004, the Israeli occupying forces have directly killed, including many by extrajudicial execution, a total of 2,770 Palestinian civilians, including children, women and men. Of those killed, more than 1,200 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces in the Gaza Strip, even though Israel has already built another kind of wall surrounding the Gaza Strip. The question that must be asked is: how then will this Wall being built by Israel solve the security problem? If anything, its route and the illegal measures entailed in its construction ensure that it will actually exacerbate the security situation. It is more than obvious that when you deprive an entire people of their rights, expropriate their land and property and wall them into enclaves and ghettos, you are not solving the security problem but creating an untenable situation that will combust.

21. At this time, I wish to make our position vis-à-vis the suicide bombings very clear. We have consistently, repeatedly and unequivocally condemned these bombings. We condemn any violence directed at civilians in this conflict, whether Israeli or Palestinian. We consider the suicide bombings to be unlawful. They are also harmful to the just and honourable cause of the Palestinian people.

22. That said, I draw attention to the fact that the first suicide bombing occurred nearly 27 years after the onset of this oppressive military occupation of the Palestinian people. This phenomenon is the result of Israeli policies and measures, including the relentless colonization of our land. It is not the cause of those policies and measures. It is also imperative that a distinction be made between such unlawful acts of violence against

Israeli civilians in Israel and acts of Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation and to military attacks by the occupying forces, consistent with international law. Nevertheless, Palestine reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful, negotiated solution to end this occupation and end this conflict.

23. There is a humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Serious violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law are being committed. The Wall, part and parcel of these violations and breaches, is severely exacerbating this situation. How can the Road Map truly succeed under such circumstances? It cannot. How can Israel expect the Palestinian side to be able to act effectively when it has destroyed Palestinian security capabilities and has confined the leader of the Palestinian people and elected President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, for more than two years, undermining the leadership's ability to properly function? It cannot. How can Israel's construction of this Wall and its continued confiscation and colonization of the Palestinian land lead to peace and security for both peoples? It cannot.

24. The colonization by Israel of the Palestinian land under its occupation and the attempts to change its legal status are not new phenomena. What is new, however, is the magnitude of Israel's attempt to change the legal status and to effect the de facto annexation of large parts of the Occupied Territory by means of the Wall. The Wall will be the culmination of all previous illegal measures and practices carried out by Israel since 1967 towards that end. It will destroy the hopes of the Palestinian people for the realization of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and destroy their faith in the rule of international law and the international community's ability to uphold it in the face of such grievous violations. It will destroy the hopes of the international community for implementation of the Road Map and the "two-State" solution of Israel and Palestine, both living side by side within secure and recognized boundaries. Such a lamentable outcome must be avoided at all costs. . . .

Background on Haiti (from page 2)

ship to those who orchestrated the 1991 coup d'état.

In 1994, public pressure and fear of an influx of Haitian "boat people" led the Clinton Administration to reverse the coup d'état and restore Aristide to power.

The Republican leadership strongly opposed the intervention. In 1995, when Republicans took control of Congress, they pushed to cancel US aid to Haiti and to finance the opposition by reallocating federal funds to Haitian non-governmental organizations opposed to Aristide.

In 2000, the Republicans exploited Haiti's electoral controversy as an opportunity to discredit Aristide. The Bush Administration pressured the Inter-American Development Bank to cancel more than \$650 million in development assistance and approved loans to Haiti — money that was slated to pay for safe drinking water, literacy programs and health services.

The seven contested senators are long gone, but the embargo remains in place, denying critical services to the poorest

people in the hemisphere.

What is Aristide's record?

The US allowed Aristide to be reinstated on the condition that he implement a neoliberal economic agenda.

Aristide complied with some US demands, including a reduction of tariffs on US-grown rice that bankrupted thousands of Haitian farmers and maintenance of a below-subsistence-level minimum wage.

But Aristide resisted privatizing state-owned resources, because of protests from his political base and because he was reluctant to relinquish control over these sources of wealth.

Aristide eventually doubled the minimum wage and — despite the embargo — prioritized education and healthcare: he built schools and renovated public hospitals; established new HIV-testing centers and doctor-training programs; and introduced a program to subsidize schoolbooks and uniforms and expand school lunch and bussing services....

Introductory Palestinian Statement to the International Court of Justice

Below we excerpt from the introductory statement made by Nasser al-Kidwa, Palestinian observer at the United Nations, on February 23 at the International Court of Justice hearings on the legality of the Apartheid Wall Israel is building inside the West Bank.

1. Mr. President, Members of the Court, it is my honour to address you on behalf of Palestine. I wish to thank the International Court of Justice for granting Palestine the opportunity to participate in these advisory proceedings on the “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”

2. I stand before you as a representative of the Palestinian people, the indigenous people of the land, who for too long have been denied the right to self-determination and sovereignty over their land and half of whom remain refugees. The Palestinian people have been subject to a military occupation for almost 37 years. They have been dehumanized and demonized, humiliated and demeaned, dispossessed and dispersed, and brutally punished by their occupier. The occupation has systematically denied them their basic rights and freedoms and has controlled almost every single aspect of their lives.

3. This case, however, is not about the whole of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – it is about the Wall. This Wall is being constructed almost entirely in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This Wall is not about security: it is about entrenching the occupation and the de facto annexation of large areas of Palestinian land. This Wall, if completed, will leave the Palestinian people with only half of the West Bank within isolated, non-contiguous, walled enclaves. It will render the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict practically impossible.

4. The Wall is not just a physical structure; it is a whole régime. It encircles entire communities in walled enclaves and, if completed, will wall-in most of the Palestinian population. It is already causing the displacement of Palestinian civilians and has imprisoned thousands of Palestinians between it and the Armistice Line of 1949, the Green Line. There is, moreover, without a doubt, a correlation between the route of the Wall and the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the water resources in the area.

5. There is also, of course, a correlation between the route of the Wall and Israel’s long-standing illegal policies and practices with regard to Jerusalem. East Jerusalem is occupied territory. The international community has never recognized Israel’s illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. The route of the Wall will clearly entrench this annexation. It will compound the humanitarian hardships being faced by the Palestinian inhabitants of the city. Moreover, it will isolate the city from the rest of the Palestinian population, obstructing their access to the city and its Holy Places.

6. We are here because the United Nations has a permanent responsibility – legally, politically and morally – for the ques-

tion of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects. The General Assembly has reaffirmed this in at least 25 resolutions. It is, after all, the General Assembly that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, dealt with mandated Palestine, deciding on 29 November 1947, in resolution 181 (II), to partition Palestine into two States, one Jewish and one Arab. The Arab State has, of course, not yet been realized; and thus the Palestinian people have been unable to exercise their right to self-determination. Indeed, Palestine is still not a Member State of the United Nations, but remains an observer. Since 1947, however, the General Assembly has never ceased dealing with the question of Palestine or its aspects.

7. The Security Council has also continuously dealt with the question of Palestine. It first placed the “Situation in Palestine” on its agenda in 1948. The Council’s attention to the matter increased after the Israeli occupation in 1967. Since then, the Council has adopted 38 resolutions addressing the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 26 of which recall the Fourth Geneva Convention, including its applicability to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.

8. These resolutions, of course, remain valid. Israel has complied with almost none of them. The Council has, historically, failed in its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in the case of Palestine. It has failed to follow up the implementation of its own resolutions and take the necessary measures to ensure compliance, and has failed to prevent the continuous and, at times, massive violations of international law and of the Charter itself. The basic reason has been the use, or the threat of use, of veto by one of the Council’s Permanent Members. In the 30 years between 1973 and 2003, 27 vetoes have been cast on the Palestinian issue. The most recent was cast on 14 October 2003, when the issue of the construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was brought before the Council and it failed to act. . . .

14. Mr. President, Members of the Court, there has been no shortage of peace initiatives on the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, since the adoption of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), and throughout every one of the subsequent initiatives, Israel has simultaneously been engaged in the intensive colonization of our land. It has transferred 400,000 illegal settlers to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It is continuously attempting to change the status, physical character, nature and demographic composition of that territory, most recently through its construction of the Wall. Actually, since the signing in 1993 of the Declaration of Principles between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, Israel not only continued its illegal settlement activities and expansion but actually doubled the number of its settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Doubled. How can it be

Continued on page 3