

Anti-Imperialist News Service

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Contents

Protests Against U.S. Coup in Haiti

African Union (AU) Statement on Haiti

Address to the Haitian People from Exile

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Updates, Features, Reference Material, Archives, and Pamphlets

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Protests Against U.S. Coup in Haiti

In early March, protests against the U.S. coup in Haiti were held in numerous cities throughout the U.S., including New York City, San Francisco, Fresno, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston.

On March 6, in New York, thousands rallied in Brooklyn, denouncing the U.S. for kidnapping Aristide and for occupying Haiti with

thousands of U.S. troops. The demonstrators demanded the return of Haiti's elected president, and called for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from the country.

On March 6, more than 150 people participated in a rally in downtown Chicago to oppose U.S. intervention.

Protestors raised slogans for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops and the restoration of the democratically elected government of the country. Furthermore, they demanded no future U.S. interference in the sovereign nation of Haiti. The demonstration was initiated by the ad-hoc Committee to Protect Constitutional Democracy in Haiti.

Opposition to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Haiti continues to grow throughout the United States. The overwhelming demand heard at these on-going protests is for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Haiti, an end to all U.S. interference and the restoration of the constitutional government of the country.

Statement on Haiti by the African Union (AU)

On March 8, the 53 countries of the African Union called Aristide's removal "unconstitutional." A statement released by the African Union (AU) Commission, stated in part:

"The African Union expresses the view that the unconstitutional way by which President Aristide was removed set a dangerous precedent for a duly elected person and wishes that no action be taken to legitimize the rebel forces"

Address to the Haitian People from Exile

The following statement was issued by Jean Bertrand Aristide on March 6, 2004 from exile in the Central African Republic.

"In overthrowing me, they have uprooted the trunk of the liberty. It will grow back because its roots are many and deep." In the shadow of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the genius of the race. I declare in overthrowing me they have uprooted the trunk of the tree of peace, but it will grow back because the roots are L'Ouverturean.

Dear compatriots, it is with these first words that I am saluting our brothers and sisters from

Africa, while I am standing on the soil of the Central African Republic. Allow me to salute you by repeating that same declaration that is, "In overthrowing me, they have uprooted the trunk of the tree of peace." During the night of the 28th of February 2004, there was a coup d'etat. One could say that it was a geo-political kidnapping. I can clearly say that it was terrorism disguised as diplomacy. To conclude, this coup d'etat and this kidnapping are like two quarters and 50 cents side by side.

I have always denounced the coming of this coup d'etat, but until the 27th of February, the day before, I didn't see that the crime was go-

Continued on page 2

Statement by Jean Bertrand Aristide (from page 1)

ing to be accompanied by kidnapping as well. The 28th of February, at night, suddenly, American military personnel who were already all over Port-au-Prince descended on my house in Tabarre to tell me first that all the American security agents who have contracts with the Haitian government only have two options. Either they leave immediately to go to the United States, or they fight to die. Secondly, they told me the remaining 25 of the American security agents hired by the Haitian government who were to come in on the 29th of February as reinforcements were under interdiction, prevented from coming. Thirdly, they told me the foreigners and Haitian terrorists alike, loaded with heavy weapons, were already in position to open fire on Port-au-Prince. And right then, the Americans precisely stated that they will kill thousands of people and it will be a bloodbath. That the attack is ready to start, and when the first bullet is fired nothing will stop them and nothing will make them wait until they take over, therefore the mission is to take me dead or alive.

At that time I told the Americans that my first preoccupation was to save the lives of those thousands of people tonight. As far as my own life is concerned, whether I am alive or whether I am dead, that is not what's important. As much as I was trying to use diplomacy, the more the pressure was being intensified for the Americans to start the attack. In spite of that, I took the risk of slowing down the death machine to verify the degree of danger, the degree of bluff or the degree of intimidation.

It was more serious than a bluff. The National Palace was surrounded by white men armed up to their teeth. The Tabarre area — the residence — was surrounded by foreigners armed to their teeth. The airport of Port-au-Prince was already under the control of these men. After a last evaluation I made during a meeting with the person in charge of Haitian security in Port-au-Prince, and the person in charge of American security, the truth was clear. There was going to be a bloodbath because we were already under an illegal foreign occupation which was ready to drop bodies on the ground, to spill blood, and then kidnap me dead or alive.

That meeting took place at 3 a.m. Faced with this tragedy, I decided to ask, "What guarantee do I have that there will not be a bloodbath if I decided to leave?"

In reality, all this diplomatic gymnastics did not mean anything because these military men responsible for the kidnapping operation had already assumed the success of their mission. What was said was done. This diplomacy, plus the forced signing of the letter of resignation, was not able to cover the face of the kidnapping.

From my house to the airport, everywhere there were American military men armed with heavy weapons of death. The military plane that came to get me landed while the convoy of vehicles that had come to get me was near the tarmac at the airport. When we were airborne, nobody knew where we were going. When we landed at one place nobody knew where we were. Among us on the plane was a baby of one of my American security agents who has a Haitian wife. They could not get out. We spent four hours without knowing where we were. When we got back in the air again, nobody knew where we were going.

It was not until 20 minutes before we landed in the Central African Republic that I was given the official word that this is where we would be landing. We landed at a French Air Force base but fortunately there were 5 ministers from the government who came to welcome us on behalf of the President there.

We know there are people back home who are suffering, who are being killed, who are in hiding. But we also know that back home there are people who understand the game, but will not give up because if they give up, instead of finding peace, we will find death.

Therefore, I ask that everyone who loves life to come together to protect the lives of others. I ask everyone who does not want to see bloodshed to come together so that it is life that flourishes instead of blood that has been spilled, or bodies falling. I know it's possible that all Haitians who live in the tenth department [Haitians living abroad] understand what tragedy lies hidden under the cover of this coup d'état, under the cover of this kidnapping. I know and they know if we stand in solidarity we will stop the spread of death and we will help life flourish. The same thing that happened to a President who was democratically elected can happen at any time, in any other country too. That's why the solidarity is indispensable to protect a democracy that works together with life.

The constitution is the source of this life. It's the guarantee of the life. Let's stand together under the constitution in solidarity so that it is life that unfolds, and that it is peace that flourishes and not death as we are seeing it. Courage, courage, courage! From where I am with the First Lady, we have not forgotten what Toussaint L'Ouverture has said, and that's why we saluted all of Africa with his words, and we are saluting all Haitians everywhere with the conviction that the roots of the tree of peace, with the spirit of Toussaint L'Ouverture inside, are alive. They can cut the tree as they have done with the machete of the coup d'état, but they cannot cut the roots of peace. It will sprout again because it has the spirit of Toussaint L'Ouverture inside.