

## **Haiti: Regional Solidarity Statement**

Written by Partido Lakas ng Masa

Sunday, 24 January 2010 09:13 - Last Updated Friday, 26 February 2010 13:11

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### **Haiti: Solidarity and Aid! Freedom and National Sovereignty! No to US Occupation!**

On January 13, 2010, a 7.3 Richter scale earthquake struck Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. The earthquake caused great destruction and 200,000 people are thought to be dead. Further, 3 million Haitians have been rendered homeless by the quake, which also damaged many public service buildings, such as hospitals and schools.

The quake has caused Haitians, who have struggled under decades of poverty and imperialist intervention and exploitation, even deeper suffering. Approximately 75% of Haitians earned less than US\$2 per day and 56% of Haitians – around 4.5 million people – earned less than US\$1 per day. Most Haitians live in houses made of adobe and mud.

Haiti is the poorest nation in the western hemisphere. The poverty is caused by the imperialism and neo-liberalism that has been oppressing the nation for centuries. The Haitian people has continuously struggled against this oppression. The 400,000 African slaves on the colonialists' sugar and coffee plantations were among the first to fight against slavery and, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, won their struggle: Haiti became the first independent Afro populated nation previously colonized by France. However, the newly independent nation was forced to pay 150 millions Francs in “damages” to its former colonial master, France.

For decades, the Haitian people suffered under and struggled against US-puppet dictatorships and regimes. In 2004, after eventually winning democratic presidential elections, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in a US-backed coup and then ostracized by the US administration. Neo-liberal policies were enforced on the population: education and health services were privatized and import tariffs on rice were severely cut to pay Haiti's foreign debt.

Under the pretext of helping Haiti to recover from the earthquake, the US is now trying to retake power in Haiti and redesign the political and economic situation to suit international capital. This is not the first time the US has done this: New Orleans, smashed by Hurricane Katrina, and Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand, devastated by the great tsunami in 2004, have faced a similar situation to Haiti. Natural disasters are used to legitimize “aid” that has neo-liberal requirements attached, such as privatization and the selling of public assets.

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The US has sent 3000 fully armed troops to Haiti. Soon, it will increase that number to around 15,000 troops. This intervention is based on the declaration of an Emergency Situation, which was forced on Haiti by the US when Hillary Clinton visited Haiti on 16 January 2010. Very quickly afterwards, the US took control of the airport: it is now deciding what goes in and out of Haiti.

US troops are not mobilized for the sake of humanity. Instead the US military's mission is to preserve the reactionary social order for US corporations and to protect the wealthy few. This is evident by the failure to use US warships to take care the injured people.

The increase in US troops in Haiti is closely related to the US' economic and political interest in Latin America as a whole, where it is attempting to strengthen its power and is developing military bases. We note the bilateral agreement between the US and Colombia, which gives the US wide access to Colombia's military bases and increases US forces stationed in Colombia, as the latest example of this.

The next stage of the US' post-disaster program in Haiti is redesigning the country's economy. This is indicated by the IMF's announcement of a US\$100 million loan to Haiti that requires the implementation of more neo-liberal programs, including increasing electricity tariffs, freezing state workers' wages and reducing inflation. That loan will greatly increase the burden on Haiti, which already has a debt of US\$165 million.

Based on this, we, the undersigned, extend our solidarity to the people of Haiti, including humanitarian aid and support for the Haitian people's struggle for freedom from imperialist exploitation. Furthermore, we demand:

- The immediate and unconditional cancellation of Haiti's debt;
- That our government give substantial, untied and unconditional humanitarian aid to the people of Haiti;
- That the humanitarian aid will support and be used to reconstruct Haiti in a way that will empower the people of Haiti to establish democracy and genuine independence for their nation.
  
- That our government condemns the United States government's exploitation of the disaster to advance the US's economic and political interests.

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We are calling all democratic and progressive organizations around the world to unite to build true solidarity with the people of Haiti. This includes helping to end the Haitian people's oppression by the imperialist states, and full support for the restoration of freedom and sovereignty for the people of Haiti.

*Partido Lakas ng Masa (Philippines), Perhimpunan Rakyat Pekerja (PRP or Working Peoples Association, Indonesia), Socialist Alliance (Australia)*