

Transform your Global Justice Sentiments into Action to End the Military Occupation of Haiti

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"In overthrowing me you have cut down in Saint Domingue [Haiti] only the trunk of the tree of liberty; it will spring up again from the roots, for they are many and they are deep." - [Toussaint L'Ouverture](#)

The people of Haiti have been living under a military occupation for over ten years by way of the *United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti* (MINUSTAH). However, this military imposition has not generated sustained organizing and mobilizing of resources from anti-war, Pan-Afrikanist/nationalist, socialist, trade unions, international solidarity activists, organizations or movements located in the imperialist centres of Europe and North America.

It is critically important for Western-based progressive forces to question themselves on the reason behind their failure to challenge the military occupation as an imperialist assault on the labouring classes, and as an attempt to prevent the emergence of a non-capitalist development agenda in Haiti. Where is the required and expected solidarity from these activist groups or social movements?

The Guinea-Bissau/Cape Verde revolutionary adult educator, theoretician, military strategist, and practitioner [Amilcar Cabral](#) calls for a solidarity from the global North that is based on mutual interest and a "[common enemy](#)":

"If, as would seem from all the evidence, imperialism exists and is trying simultaneously to dominate the working class in all the advanced countries and smother the national liberation movements in all the underdeveloped countries, then there is only one enemy against whom we are fighting. If we are fighting together, then I think the main aspect of our solidarity is extremely simple: it is to fight - I don't think there is any need to discuss this very much. We are struggling in Guinea with guns in our hands, you must struggle in your countries as well - I don't say with guns in your hands, I'm not going to tell you how to struggle, that's your business; but you must find the best means and the best forms of fighting against our common enemy: this is the best form of solidarity."

On the question of MINUSTAH's occupation of Haiti, it would be hard for peace and global justice organizations to declare that they are using the "best means and the best forms of fighting" to end the 10-year military intervention scheme by the United States and its allies, and the United Nations. On October 14, 2014, the United Nations Security Council unanimously voted to [extend the presence](#) of the occupation force for another year. It was done without significant mobilization and opposition from peace, global justice and

internationality solidarity activists and organizations.

The people across the world who are committed to the self-determination of oppressed peoples should work to ensure that this imperial military mission ends before October 15, 2015. Some members of the public might be puzzled by the triggering event(s) that led to the occupation.

The reformist or populist government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and [Fanmi Lavalas](#) were committed to pursuing economic and social policies that opposed the unfettered neoliberal capitalist agenda of Canada, the United States, and France, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the local Haitian elite.

In spite of the hostility to the developmental agenda of Aristide by local elite and certain Western states, and the [channeling of development funds and economic aid](#) through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) instead of the Haitian state, positive developments were made in the areas of education, healthcare, economic justice, infrastructure development, women's rights, the status of children, and official recognition of the indigenous religion [Voudou](#). The economic and social outcomes of the administrations of Fanmi Lavalas from 1994 to 2004 are captured in the booklet [We Will Not Forget: The Achievements of Lavalas in Haiti](#).

However, the unholy alliance of Canada, France, and the United States met in Ottawa on January 31, 2003 and February 1, 2003 and resolved to engineer a [regime change in Haiti](#). On February 29, 2004, a coup, facilitated by the George Bush regime in Washington and his allies, was effected against the democratically elected government. President Aristide has consistently claimed that he was [kidnapped](#) and forced into exile in the Central African Republic by armed personnel of the government of the United States.

Washington and its allies imposed an occupation force the *Multinational Interim Force* on Haiti, which was replaced by MINUSTAH in June 2004. MINUSTAH has played an active role in forcefully suppressing the resistance of the pro-Aristide and pro-Fanmi Lavalas majority. The occupation has brought suffering to the labouring classes in Haiti. [MINUSTAH serves as a cover](#) for the agenda of economic exploitation and political subjugation of the masses, and the [geo-strategic and economic interests](#) of the United States and its partners.

People of good conscience have no other option, but to build campaigns in their cities and towns to force the withdrawal of MINUSTAH from Haiti. MINUSTAH's [documented cases of abuse](#) and wrongdoing against the people of Haiti provide the moral and political justification for an end to this occupation.

International solidarity, peace, and global justice organizations and movements need to undertake practical steps in their communities and countries to force an end to MINUSTAH's military occupation. Below are some concrete actions that might be used in organizing campaigns against the occupation, and support the self-determination of the working-class and rural communities in Haiti.

- Organize a broad-based group: If the convenors of the initial organizing meetings are interested in developing a broad-based anti-occupation/MINUSTAH campaign to educate and mobilize opinion in their city or town, the call for action should be directed at a wide range of progressive individuals and organizations that are

interested in international solidarity, global justice, anti-war activism, Afrikan affairs, alternative development, and anti-imperialism. By casting their outreach net widely, they will be able to reach into the multiple constituencies that are present in the community.

- Prepare workshop and lecture presentations and public education materials: In winning extensive support within the local community and across the country for the termination of the United Nations' occupation of Haiti, the campaign will need to methodically carry out public education and awareness activities. The anti-occupation projects could prepare PowerPoint presentations and workshop curriculums on a range of topics such as "the Haitian Revolution and its Contribution to Freedom in the Americas," "How France, the United States and the Colonial Powers Underdeveloped Post-revolutionary Haiti," "The 411 on the Military Occupation of Haiti by MINUSTAH," "The Nuts and Bolts of Building the Campaign to End the Occupation of Haiti," "Why the West Fears the Haitian People's Struggle for Self-determination," "Practical People-to-People Solidarity Actions with Haiti's Grassroots," "Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Fanmi Lavalas and Social Reform in Haiti," and "The Strategic Value of Haiti to the United States and its Allies."

The development of prepared presentations would make it easier to communicate a consistent message to the public. It would also make it easier to train a large pool of organizers to become workshop facilitators and public speakers on the subject of the military occupation and other relevant topics on Haiti. The campaign will need to develop public educational materials in the form of fact sheets, brochures, pamphlets, and videos.

- Diverse pool of facilitators or animators: The task of going out into the community and across the country to educate the people about MINUSTAH and the neoliberal capitalist agenda needs a lot of people. Therefore, this international solidarity project should train and develop a diverse pool of facilitators or animators, and public speakers to educate, mobilize, and organize the people against the occupation and its conservative agenda. The people who do this educational work ought to reflect the demographic characteristics in the broader society. In communities where Haitians are present, the campaign should strive to have this section of the community as active participants in all levels of the campaign.
- Target membership-based organizations: In order to build mass support within the community and across the country, give strong attention to speaking before membership-based groups such as trade unions, professional associations, faculty associations and unions, community-based organizations, religious groups, and student unions, students in high schools, colleges and universities. The aim of this tactic is to inspire members to include the campaign to end the occupation as a part of the organization's ongoing organizational activities. Many member-based organizations, especially dues paying ones, have human and other resources to execute international solidarity or global justice work. These membership based organizations are potential financial and in-kind donors to the campaign.

- Engender anti-occupation student clubs: The campaign should seek to work with global justice or international solidarity student organizers to form “End the Occupation of Haiti” student clubs on high school, college, and university campuses. Students were important allies in the fight against settler-colonialism/apartheid in Azania/South Afrika as they are now in the boycott, divestment and sanctions([BDS](#)) [movement](#) against Israel’s occupation of Palestine. Students have the time, access to financial resources, and skills and knowledge that can be used to create public awareness and opposition to the occupation of Haiti.
- Key thrust of the message: It should be emphasized in the campaign’s messaging that the forces that are opposed to the public provision of education, healthcare, and social services, government ownership of public utilities and other commercial enterprises, and a livable minimum wage in Haiti have a similar agenda in global North countries. The agents of the neoliberal capitalist project in Canada, the United States, and Europe lobby for reduced government spending on post-secondary education, tighter eligibility rules for unemployment benefits, private sector provision of childcare, lower taxes on profits, wealth, and higher income, and the general retreat of government from providing adequate social welfare programmes.

Drive home the message to the public that neoliberal capitalism in Haiti and the global North is contributing to social and economic hardship to the people who sell their labour to the captains of industry and commerce in exchange for wages, or are dependent on income security programmes. The labouring classes in Haiti and the global North are fighting “one enemy” as Cabral would have it. In the words of [Brian Latour](#), “given the rise of neoliberal globalization at the hands of the forces of international capital – global capitalism requires a global response, and international solidarity is necessary for global resistance.”

- Use of social media outlets: Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have emerged as significant communication instruments for the sharing of information with the public. The campaign should use social media to inform and educate, but most importantly the overarching goal ought to be focused on inspiring people to join the campaign or participate in or support its public activities or actions.
- Constantly write about Haiti: The campaign ought to undertake measures to produce a steady stream of articles on Haiti that highlights the negative impact of the occupation, and the ways in which the current neoliberal capitalist social and economic policies are affecting the lives of Haitians. The campaign should make an effort to develop an in-house stable of writers as well as pitch story ideas to sympathetic writers who cover global justice, human writers, and international solidarity issues.
- Host film series: Many people love to learn or acquire information visually by way of films or videos. The hosting of periodic film series on Haiti over a weekend or four consecutive Fridays or Saturdays would be a way to build awareness of the occupation, the Haitian Revolution, women’s labour and the sweatshops, the 1991 and 2004 coups against Aristide and Fanmi Lavalas, and the struggle of

Haitians for self-determination. The screening of a film could be coupled with a panel discussion or a guest speaker so as to direct participants' attention to what must be done to fight the occupation and the neoliberal capitalist agenda. A film series may be used to recruit new participants into the campaign, as well as raise funds to execute its activities.

- Build awareness of UN's cholera deaths: The campaign ought to highlight one of the most prominent cases of the negative impact of the occupation on the lives of Haitians. The United Nations has steadfastly refused to [accept legal liability](#) for the cholera tragedy. In October 2010, MINUSTAH's soldiers dumped untreated sewage into the Artibonite River, and it led to the introduction of cholera in Haiti. To date, there are over 9,000 deaths and over 750,000 cases of infection. This MINUSTAH disaster may be used to rally support for the [class action lawsuit](#) levied against the UN by the *Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti*. The refusal of the UN to accept responsibility for the cholera outbreak could serve as an indictment of the occupation.
- Target and recruit opinion leaders: The campaign should strive to win the support of individuals and organizations that have the capacity to influence public opinion to endorse the call for the withdrawal of the occupation force. This course of action by opinion makers and thought leaders might lead to people gaining awareness of MINUSTAH, embracing an anti-occupation outlook, or inspiring active involvement in the campaign. The value of opinion makers to a cause may be gleaned from the response to critiques by public notables and celebrities of Israel's occupation of Palestine. Nobel laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu's public characterization of the oppression of Palestinians as being [similar to](#) that imposed on Afrikans under apartheid in South Afrika might have positively influenced or changed minds on the Palestinians' struggle for self-determination.
- Develop media watch capacity: In order to maintain a vigilance on how the occupation and news out of Haiti are being framed in the mainstream media, a "Haiti Media Watch" function ought to be developed within the campaign. The committee would develop the ability to swiftly and accurately respond to stories in newspapers, on television and radio, as well as on social media outlets. It is critically important to link news coming out of Haiti to the United States and its allies' desire to impose the neoliberal capitalist agenda on Haitians, and the demand for the withdrawal of MINUSTAH.
- Organize speaking tours: It is necessary to organize speaking tours on the occupation and the neoliberal capitalist agenda in Haiti. The facilitators and speakers involved in the campaign would be the main people called upon to speak to organizations or do workshops. The campaign may also put together speaking tours with speakers directly from Haiti to educate and raise the awareness of the situation inside the country. Religious groups, faculty associations or unions, student organizations, and trade unions are ideal candidates to cosponsor speaking tours with international speakers from Haiti or Haitian activists who are in exile.

- Mobilize through protest actions: The anti-occupation organizing group may use important anniversaries connected to the coups of 1991 and 2004, significant moments in Haitian history, and dates that are relevant to the occupation to organize marches, demonstrations, rallies, and teach-ins. Public protest actions are ways to demonstrate the level of community or public support for the withdrawal of MINUSTAH's occupation force.
- Picket officials from MINUSTAH contributing states: Officials from states that contribute military or police personnel to MINUSTAH should be picketed when they visit countries with anti-occupation campaigns. It is fundamentally necessary for these states to know that people of good conscience are demanding the withdrawal of their contingent of troops or police. It is also a way to inform or remind the public that a military occupation is in effect against a people who would love to freely and democratically elect the party of their choice.
- Phone-in and fax-in protest: Coordinated protest action in the form of phone-in or fax-in may be used against consulates and embassies of states that are participating in the occupation. This type of protest is aimed at reinforcing the call for an end to the occupation, and disrupting the operation of the consulates and embassies. It could be done in tandem with informational leafleting or picketing at the respective locations of these official bodies of states that enable MINUSTAH's occupation.
- Force Haiti onto the legislative radar: Since the contributing MINUSTAH states would need to make a political decision about withdrawing from the occupation, it is essential to generate massive public pressure on the political directorate to do so. The public should be mobilized to write letters and make calls to the members of the national legislature, especially those representing their respective electoral districts, ridings or constituencies. It is better to encourage people to send personally scripted messages as opposed to signing and sending a form letter. The former will get a greater degree of attention and response from the legislators. It would be helpful to provide talking points or fact sheets from which letter writers or people making phone calls may craft their personal messages demanding the termination of the occupation of Haiti.
- Participate in international delegations: The organizing of fact-finding international delegations to Haiti is a way to encourage active participation of some visiting organizations or delegates to the anti-occupation campaign at home. International delegations also demonstrate to Haitian grassroots organizations that there is support for their struggle for self-determination. Returning delegates may be empowered and motivated to hit the speaking circuit by way of speaking tours and media interviews. The returning delegates ought to be encouraged to write articles that highlight their observations, insights, learnings, and experiences of the occupation, and the state of political, social and economic events inside the country.
- Material and moral support to Haitian organizations: The anti-occupation campaign should encourage the development of people-to-people relations

between organizations and movements in Haiti and their counterparts in Canada, the United States and other countries. While the principal or primary solidarity expected from organizations in the global North is domestically fighting imperialism's ability to impose its will on Haiti and other countries, ["secondary forms of solidarity"](#) as articulated by Cabral, are needed.

The provision of material support to organizations representing women, youth, workers, farmers, and other groups from the popular sectors would expand their capacity and capability to fight for an alternative development agenda. When MINUSTAH is forced out of Haiti, the organizations of the people will still be faced with the task of charting a development path that will likely be opposed by the United States and its allies.

- Create social expression products to raise money: Financial resources are needed to carry out the campaign's public education work. Therefore, money may be raised through the development of social expression products such as T-shirts, mugs, buttons, refrigerator magnets, and stickers that would be sold to the public. Membership-based organizations could become a main outlet for moving these products. These goods would promote the message of the campaign, and they are ideal items because of their functional nature.
- Make links with other anti-occupation campaigns: The struggle to rid Haiti of MINUSTAH should strive to become a worldwide movement. After all, the troops and police personnel are represented by states from across the world (for example, Russia, China, Spain, Jamaica, Nigeria, France, Pakistan, Cameroon, Brazil, Chile, Turkey, Egypt, Canada, and the United States). In developing ties among the global forces fighting the occupation, the campaigns would benefit from sharing information, strategy, tactics and other resources, and the coordination of their actions. In the Americas, the [Haiti NO Minustah](#) is encouraging a region-wide opposition to the occupation of Haiti, and many groups across Central America, South America, and the Caribbean have signed on to the campaign.

It is not the mere words or beliefs that define an activist's commitment to international solidarity or global justice. The anti-imperialist sentiments of a person of good conscience ought to be measured by her or his actions against oppressive conditions such as MINUSTAH's occupation of Haiti, which is preparing the fertile soil for an [entrenched neoliberal capitalist development path](#). Hopefully, the proposed actions above might inspire you to become a participant in a campaign to bring MINUSTAH's occupation to an end, or contribute to the work of anti-occupation organizations.

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