

December 1993

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN HAITI

ISSUE

The efforts of the international community during 1993 failed to put an end to the massive human rights violations occurring in Haiti.

BACKGROUND

The year 1993 began under promising auspices with the appointment of Dante Caputo, Special Envoy of the OAS and UN Secretaries-General, the sending of some 250 human rights observers on the civilian mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), and diplomatic pressures leading to the adoption of a limited embargo by the Security Council.

These efforts led to the signing of the Governors Island Accord, the formation of a constitutional government led by Prime Minister Malval, the removal of the sanctions and the deployment of some 50 RCMP officers, along with personnel sent to pave the way for the United Nations Mission to Haiti (UNMH), such as police officers and military construction specialists.

Once the sanctions were lifted and the ship transporting the initial members of the UNMH military contingent abruptly departed, a chain reaction occurred that led to the temporary removal of the UN and the OAS from the scene, and strengthened those opposed to the accord. The "Friends of the Secretary-General on the Haitian Issue" are taking action with President Aristide at this time to have the pressures increased and the agreement reactivated.

In Haiti itself, the overall human rights situation has not improved. The presence of the MICIVIH in Port-au-Prince, and especially in the provinces, restored the confidence and courage of the democratic forces, as exemplified by the response to the attack on Mgr. Romélus. Elsewhere, determined observers succeeded in obtaining the release of prisoners, preventing arrests and exactions and keeping at bay a military force too accustomed to doing as it pleased, hidden from foreign eyes. After its departure, the MICIVIH was sorely missed by those who had placed their confidence in it; many Haitians who had cooperated with the mission have suffered mistreatment since it left. Some of its work has been taken up by private organizations such as Cry for Justice International, in which a few Canadians have participated and which has received Canadian Embassy support.

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