

**Press Note**  
**November 18, 2022**  
**Trou-du-Nord, Haiti**

November 18, 1803, marks the Battle of Vertières, the last battle of the indigenous Haitian army that led to freeing the enslaved African descendants and the abolition of slavery for all humanity. This date marks the end of the system of slavery, of racial discrimination that the enslaved faced, and all other harms the enslaved suffered under European dominance. These harms occurred during more than 300 years of colonization and pillaging of resources, particularly gold. These atrocities and colonial oppression led to the tragic genocide of the indigenous people on the island, the Taíno, and the destruction of their civilization. It is a genocide we will never forget.

November 18, 2022, marks 219 years since the enslaved masses said *no* to colonization—demanding *tout moun se moun*, all people are people, and that all people have the right to live in peace. Since the foundation of the Haitian state, the dominant class—those who had been free, rather than enslaved, at the time of the revolution—refused to accept that all people would have the same rights. After the assassination of Jean Jacques Dessalines, the dominant class took control of the northern plain and the most fertile farmland; the dominant class took 90% of the riches of the country.

The expropriation of peasant land continued during the U.S. occupation. American multinational corporations grabbed peasant land and installed extractivist megaprojects. The land grabs contributed to the decision of peasants to immigrate to the Dominican Republic and Cuba to work in the sugarcane farms.

After January 12, 2010, the PHTK regime came into power in Haiti. They instrumentalized the justice system to further their own interests. PHTK gangsterized the country, and gangs have operated with total systemic impunity. Human rights violations are widespread, and members of the oligarchy who have political and economic power are grabbing peasants' land and forcing them to leave their farms, their animals, and their livelihoods that sustain their families. These land grabs are often arbitrary and illegal, for example: Free trade zones including the Caracol Industrial Park and CODEVI in Ouanaminthe, Agritrans S.A. in Trou du Nord, *Tè Peyizàn Ti Plantè* (Small Planters Peasants' Land) in Terrier Rouge, peasants' land Prewwans in Ouanaminthe, peasants' land MOPAG in Gran Basen, peasants land MPTR in Terrier Rouge, Savane Diane in St. Michel, Ile-a-Vache...

- These projects affect all community members and have specifically harmful impacts on women and young girls who suffer from sexual violence.
- These projects affect the environment of these communities even though these are areas that have already suffered greatly due to climate disorder; these projects are accompanied by an increase in violence against peasants, and we note that more women are becoming pregnant and having children without fathers.
- These projects affect peasants, making them food insecure, causing more people in the community to go hungry and young people to turn to delinquency.
- Forced seizures of peasants' land negatively impacts peasants' right to family and many other rights that the Haitian Constitution guarantees, as well as rights guaranteed under international law.

When we consider Article 247 of the 1987 Constitution, that states that working the land is the principal source of wealth in Haiti, recognizing that it permits all people to live in peace and facilitates the country's progress;

When we consider article 39 of the 1987 Constitution that states that the first person who has a right to work the land are rural people who live on the land in a given area;

When we consider Article 19 of the 1987 Constitution, which says that the state must ensure that all Haitian people can continue to live in good health and as confirmed by the UN Declaration on Human Rights, that the rights of all people are respected;

When we consider the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, that guarantees peasants' right to land and, in the Preamble, shows the fundamental role that women play in guaranteeing the economic and general well-being of their families, and notes that often women do not have land title even though they work the land, and that it is more difficult for women to access agricultural credit;

When we consider Article 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which says that all people have a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care, and necessary social services. In addition, this article protects the rights of women and children to special care.

When we consider Article 12 of the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which protects the right of all people to a high standard of physical and psychological health. It requires the State to take steps to reduce infant mortality and to improve all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene;

When we consider that after the earthquake on January 12, 2010, when PHTK came to power, that the rights of peasants in the Northeast department of Haiti were systematically violated, when I, Milostène Castin, Human Rights Defender, particularly an Earth Rights Defender and Defender of Land and the Environment, and activist with AREDE (*Action pour la Reforestation et la Defense de l'Environnement* (Action to Defend and Reforest the Environment) took note of all of the human rights violations occurring in my community, I decided to accompany peasants in the battle that they were leading to demand respect for their rights. As with many places around the world where activists defending human rights receive threats and face repression, including assassination, for example Berta Cáceres in Honduras in 2016, because I accompany peasants and oppressed people, I have also received threats.

After all the threats, repression, and assassination attempts I have received in the past ten years, I decided to take action. I am not only calling attention to my case to protect myself, but to speak out on behalf of all peasants who are suffering human rights violations today.

Today, November 18th, 2022, I ask my lawyers to submit my complaint before the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor.

**Organizations that Sign this Note in Solidarity Include:**

MPDD: -----

AREDE:-----

Ti Plante:-----

Kodinasyon Rezistans Kont Dappiyanp sou Tè peyizan nan Nò ak Nòdès (Coordinating Committee of Resistance Against Land Grabs of Peasants in the North and Northeast): -----

MOPAG: -----

Kolektif Peyizan Viktim Tè Chabè (Collective of Peasants Victims of Chabè):-----

MPTR:-----

**Carbon Copied:**

Former Special Rapporteur on all forms of racial discrimination, E. Tendayi Achiume

Rapporteur on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders and Justice Operators for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Joel Hernandez García

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian A. Nichols

Executive Director of Frontline Defenders, Andrew Anderson

Amnesty International Researcher on Human Rights Defenders, Lisa Maracani