



Church of the Brethren General Board

Resolution on Haiti

June 28, 1994

The Church of the Brethren General Board, at its meeting on June 28, 1994, in Wichita, Kansas, heard with dismay reports of the deteriorating situation in Haiti and the ineffective gestures of the international community to oust the military leaders who deposed President Jean Bertrand Aristide in September 1991. The common people are suffering while the Haitian military and elite prosper under the UN-imposed sanctions.

We also heard testimony from the National Spiritual Council of Haitian Churches (CONASPEH), who are calling on other Christians to reflect on the teachings of Scripture in the face of such suffering. They consider many aspects of US policy to be contributing to the crisis. CONASPEH has called on US Churches to bring moral pressure to bear on their government to reverse these policies that only increase this tragedy.

The 1977 Annual Conference statement on Justice and Nonviolence guides us as we assess our duty to act. "No person is created for poverty, but all are born to a full place at the table. Government is to rule with justice for every person. We deplore imprisonment for nonviolent opposition to a government and all forms of repression, torture, censorship, and discrimination."

Recent actions by the Clinton Administration to rework its failed Haiti policy prove that citizen action by individuals, churches, and solidarity groups can effect significant changes in US foreign policy. The stated policy shift by Washington has not changed the daily reality of violence and terror in Haiti as the military consolidates its power. In addition, the continued policy of interdicting/repatriating Haitian refugees is discriminatory and violate international law. Even under the "new" US refugee policy, officials predict that 95 percent of Haitians fleeing repression will continue to be returned to Haiti.

Now we fear that a decision in favor of US military intervention may be imminent. We are alarmed at voices in the U.S. government calling for this action. Also we are reminded that US military intervention in Haiti during the years 1915 through 1934 did not lead to social justice there and we affirm our conviction that it will not bring true democracy and lasting peace to Haiti now.

The gospel of Jesus Christ compels us as an historic peace church to oppose the use of any kind of military assault on Haiti and urge the US and the UN to apply nonviolent, diplomatic and judicial initiatives rather than attempt to restore democracy and human rights in Haiti through violent means. Specifically, we call upon leaders in Congress and the administration to formulate US policy toward Haiti that provides:

1. Support for the complete and immediate nonviolent restoration of the democratically elected government;
2. Pressure for the immediate departure of the Haitian military high command that engineered the coup;
3. Consistent, active support for the human rights of Haitian citizens;
4. A policy focus on resolving the root causes of the refugees' flight rather than the continued practice of interdiction, repatriation, and discriminatory treatment of Haitian refugees, all of which violate international law;

5. An end to US funding for programs which undermine human rights, democracy, or equitable development in Haiti;
6. Greater support for the UN/OAS mission to Haiti

To the Christian community and the Church of the Brethren in particular:

1. We call for prayer and fasting for peace with Justice in Haiti;
2. We exhort our congregation to be grassroots advocates for the above policy platforms, encouraging them to obtain copies of the 1977 Annual Conference Statement on Justice and Nonviolence, to review and study the document and to use it with this 1994 resolution as a viable resource for advocacy and Christ-like compassion;
3. We call on our Washington Office to advocate on behalf of these platforms with the administration and Congress;

We commit ourselves to renewed prayer and advocacy on behalf of our brother and sister Haitians until they once again enjoy peace, justice, and their “full place at the table.”

Approved June 28, 1994 Wichita, KS