

Human Rights Training for Officers of the Haitian National Police Mirebalais (Central Plateau Department) April 2-3, 2007

On April 2nd, beneath the hills of the lower plateau at the **Wozo Plaza Hotel of Mirebalais**, the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) opened a two-day human rights training seminar for members of the Haitian National Police (PNH). The seminar was carried out in partnership with the General Administration of the Haitian National Police (DGPNH), and included regular police officers of all levels, prison guards, agents of specialized units (CIMO and UDMO) as well as representatives of the UN mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH/UNPOL). All were actively posted in the Central Plateau department. **The objective of the training was to reinforce the police officers' theoretical knowledge in human rights.**



The participants, including forty-one (41) Haitian officers and four (4) UNPOL representatives, as well as two (2) members of the Central Department Human Rights Network (RECENDH), were from twelve (12) communities in the Central Plateau department.

The training focused on two themes :

- 1. The chain of command and overall structure of the Haitian National Police**
- 2. Role of the police in the protection of human rights in a democratic society**

The first theme-elaborated by Darius VENUS, municipal commissioner and representative of the general director of the PNH-was a brief history on the police from its establishment until present time, and then further presented "**the chain of command and overall structure of the Haitian National Police**" :

- ▶ Law conveying the creation, organization, and the function of the PNH
- ▶ Rules of general discipline
- ▶ Code of ethics of the PNH
- ▶ Internal rules of the penitentiary establishment
- ▶ Rules of the specialized units
- ▶ Manual of the PNH personnel

For the second theme, Mr. Jean Simon SAINT HUBERT presented the "**Role of the police in the protection of human rights in a democratic society**". SAINT HUBERT developed these concepts in a Haitian framework, using national, regional, and international documents : the 1987 Haitian Constitution ; the American Convention of Human Rights ; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ; international pacts relating to civil and political rights, and social, economic and cultural rights, etc. ; a list of rights protected in a democratic society ; and the right to life and the maintaining of public order.



Both the trainers used the participative methods in presenting their themes, resulting in all of the participants actively engaging in debates, questions, and recommendations.

The participants of the seminar completed an evaluation form as a way to assess the organization of the seminar, the quality of the trainers, the overall comprehension of the themes, and to obtain any recommendations. The evaluation revealed a high level of satisfaction with the seminar, and an appreciation for the topics addressed. One participant noted that it was a good chance for the officers to refresh their understanding of protocol, since there are a series of things that get neglected over time. Other participants pointed out that despite their chance to debate some of these questions in the seminar, serious issues remain unsettled.

For example, how can officers be expected to get a warrant for each arrest when it takes five hours to reach the nearest tribunal, which may be closed upon arrival? Also, when there is a single officer acting as police, jail guard and border security, as is the case in some of the smaller towns on the east end of Haiti, how can he or she be expected to satisfy every rule and regulation? And even in the larger towns, the police are terribly underfunded and understaffed. This question of insufficient means was a theme in both the evaluations and the general debate held on the second day of the training. While RNDDH acknowledged the seriousness of this problem, it was also quick to point out that a lack of funds is never a justification for the violation of human rights.

At the closure of the seminar, a certificate of participation, signed by the General Director of the Haitian National Police and the Executive Director of RNDDH, was handed out to the participants.

This training session for the Haitian National Police was the second in a series of ten sessions which RNDDH is conducting, one for each department. The first was held the 30-31 of August 2006 in Jacmel (Southeast department). The next session is expected to be carried out in the Grande Anse department. **Through these sessions, RNDDH expects a reduction in human rights violations committed by the PNH and an improvement in the rapport between the Police and the population.**

RNDDH would like to thank the General Director of the PNH, UNPOL, the trainers, the press, and all the participants for their collaboration in making the seminar a success.