

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > France > French Imperialism, international relations (France) > Relations France - LA/Caribbean (France) > **Haiti : An open letter to French President Nicolas Sarkozy**

Haiti : An open letter to French President Nicolas Sarkozy

mardi 17 août 2010, par [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 16 août 2010).

In an open letter published today in the French national newspaper *Libération*, more than 90 leading academics, authors and other prominent figures from around the world are publicly calling on the French government to reimburse the 90 million gold francs France extorted from Haitians following Haiti's independence.

Amongst the signatories are MIT linguist Noam Chomsky, journalist Naomi Klein, authors Eduardo Galeano and Ariel Dorfman, Princeton professor Cornel West, French philosophers Alain Badiou, Étienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière, and several members of the European parliament, including anti-globalization activist José Bové. Members of the national assemblies of France and of Québec, and Walden Bello, author and elected member of the Philippine House of Representatives, have also signed.

August 16, 2010

The French government has indicated that it is pursuing possible legal action against the Committee for the Reimbursement of the Indemnity Money Extorted from Haiti (CRIME) over a Yes Men-inspired announcement last Bastille Day pledging that France would pay Haiti restitution.

We believe the ideals of equality, fraternity and liberty would be far better served if, instead of pouring public resources into the prosecution of these pranksters, France were to start paying Haiti back for the 90 million gold francs that were extorted following Haitian independence.

This "independence debt," which is today valued at well over the 17 billion euros pledged in the fake announcement last July 14, illegitimately forced a people who had won their independence in a successful slave revolt, to pay again for their freedom. Imposed under threat of military invasion and the restoration of slavery by French King Charles X, to compensate former colonial slave-owners for lost "property" (including the slaves who had won their freedom and independence when they defeated Napoleon's armies), this indemnity burdened generations of Haitians with an illegitimate debt, which they were still paying right up until 1947.

France is not the only country that owes a debt to Haiti. After 1947, Haiti incurred debt to commercial banks and international financial institutions under the Duvalier dictatorships, who stole billions from the public treasury. The basic needs and development aspirations of generations of Haitians were sacrificed to pay back these debts. Granting Haiti the status of Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) and canceling part of the current debt only begins to reverse the financial damage done by these recent debts. More recently, in 2000, Inter-American Development Bank loans of \$150

million for basic infrastructure were illegally blocked by the US government as a means of political pressure. This also did measurable economic and human damage. Each of these institutions and governments should be responsible for the harm they did to Haiti's society and economy.

In 2003, when the Haitian government demanded repayment of the money France had extorted from Haiti, the French government responded by helping to overthrow that government. Today, the French government responds to the same demand by CRIME by threatening legal action. These are inappropriate responses to a demand that is morally, economically, and legally unassailable. In light of the urgent financial need in the country in the wake of the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, we urge you to pay Haiti, the world's first black republic, the restitution it is due. -

Tariq Ali, author

Gilbert Achcar, author

Michael Albert, Z Communications

Pierre Alferi, author

Jean-Claude Amara, spokesperson, Droits devant !! (Rights First)

Kevin B Anderson, University of California at Santa Barbara

Roger Annis, Haiti Solidarity BC

Anthony Arnone, author and editor, Haymarket Books

Alain Badiou, Professor, European Graduate School

Étienne Balibar, emeritus professor of philosophy, Paris-Nanterre

Nnimmo Bassey, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth—Nigeria

Rosalyn Baxandall, Prof Emeritus, Distinguished Teaching Prof. SUNY Old Westbury. adjunct CUNY Labor School

Pierre Beaudet, founder, Alternatives

Dan Beeton, Center for Economic and Policy Research

Walden Bello, member of the Philippine House of Representatives

Medea Benjamin, Code Pink

Andy Bichlbaum & Mike Bonnano, the "Yes Men"

Serge Bouchereau, Résistance Haïtienne au Québec (Haitian Resistance in Quebec)

Myriam Bourgy, CADTM International (Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt)

Houria Bouteldja, Indigènes de la République (the Republic's Natives)

José Bové, member of the European parliament, Europe Ecologie

Leslie Cagan, co-founder, United for Peace and Justice

Aldrin Calixte, Friends of the Earth—Haïti

Ellen Cantarow, journalist

Camille Chalmers, State University of Haiti & PAPDA (Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development)

CEDETIM (Center for international solidarity research and initiatives)

Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Stefan Christoff, journalist & community organizer

Jeff Cohen, author & media critic

Jim Cohen, Dept. of Political Science, Paris VIII

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, member of European Parliament, Europe Ecology, co-president of the Greens-Europe Free Alliance

Brian Concannon, Institute for Justice & Democracy In Haiti

Raphaël Confiant, author

Mike Davis, author & scholar, University of California Riverside

Warren Davis, Solidarity Co-Chair, Philadelphia Jobs with Justice

Nick Dearden, Jubilee Debt Campaign UK

Rokhaya Diallo, activist, Les indivisibles (the Indivisible)

Christine Delphy, sociology professor
Rea Dol, director of the Port-au-Prince school SOPUDEP
Ariel Dorfman, Duke University
Stephen Duncombe, New York University
Berthony Dupont, Haïti Liberté
Ben Ehrenreich, author
Joe Emersberger, MediaLens
Yves Engler, author
Eric Fassin, sociologist, Ecole Normale Supérieure
Dianne Feeley, editor, Against the Current
John Feffer, co-director, Foreign Policy In Focus
Anthony Fenton, journalist & researcher
Bill Fletcher, Jr., BlackCommentator.com
Eduardo Galeano, author
Grazia Ietto-Gillies, UNCTAD & London South Bank University
Greg Grandin, history professor, New York University
Arun Gupta, editor, The Independent
Peter Hallward, philosophy professor, Kingston University
Hamé, rapper, La Rumeur
Stuart Hammond, Canada Haiti Action Network
Thomas Harrison, co-director, Campaign for Peace and Democracy
Helene Hazera, producer with France Culture radio
John Hilary, executive director, War on Want
HK, musician, Hk & les saltimbanks
Doug Ireland, U.S. correspondent and columnist, Bakchich l'hebdo
Kim Ives, Haïti Liberté
Olatunde Johnson, director, Friends of the Earth—Sierra Leone
Eva Joly, member of European parliament, president of the European parliament's Development Commission
Mario Joseph, BAI (Office of International Lawyers, Port-au-Prince)
Mathieu Kassovitz, film director
Robin D. G. Kelley, author and scholar, University of Southern California
Richard Kim, editor, The Nation
Amir Khadir, Québec Solidaire, representative in the National Assembly of Québec
Sadri Khiari, mouvement des Indigènes de la République (MIR)
Naomi Klein, author & journalist
Pierre Labossiere, Haiti Action
Joanne Landy, co-director, Campaign for Peace and Democracy o
Fanfan Latour, Haiti Liberté
Charles Laurence, journalist and author
Jesse Lemisch, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of NY
Reed Lindsay, journalist
Pauline Londeix, ACT UP-Paris
Isabel Macdonald, journalist & media critic
Christian Mahieux, national secretary of the Union Syndicaliste Solidaires (the Solidarity Syndicalist Union)
Henri Maler, scholar
Noël Mamère, representative in the French national assembly
Betty Reid Mandell, co-editor, New Politics
Marvin Mandell, co-editor, New Politics
Jerome Martin, ACT-UP Paris

John G. Mason, William Paterson University of NJ
Gustave Massiah, founding member of AITEC-IPAM (International association of Technicians, Experts and Researchers—Initiatives for Another World)
Georgina Murray, sociology professor, Griffith University
Cyril Mychalejko, Upside Down World
Robert Naiman, analyst, Just Foreign Policy
Jan Nederveen Pieterse, University of California at Santa Barbara
Bernard Noël, poet
Derrick O’Keefe, writer and Co-Chair, Canadian Peace Alliance
Karen Orenstein, Friends of the Earth-U.S.
Rosalind Petchesky, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Hunter College & the Graduate Center, City University of New York
Wadner Pierre, Inter Press Service
Kevin Pina, Haiti Information Project
Justin Podur, environmental studies professor, York University
Serge Quadruppani, author
Adam Ramsay, No Shock Doctrine for Haiti
Jacques Rancière, philosophy professor, Paris VIII
Judy Rebick, author and founder of Rabble.ca
William I. Robinson, University of California Santa Barbara
Pierre Rousset, ESSF (Europe Solidarity Without Borders)
Stephen R. Shalom, William Paterson University of NJ
Bobbi Siegelbaum, Health Educator
Steve Siegelbaum, Founder The Computer School, NYC
Fanny Simon, Aitec-IPAM (International association of Technicians, Experts and Researchers—Initiatives for Another World)
Eyal Sivan, film director
Ashley Smith, long-time Haiti solidarity activist
Jeb Sprague, University of California Santa Barbara
Louis-Georges Tin, CRAN (Conseil Representatif des Associations Noirs)
Jerome Thorel, Big Brother Awards France
Louis-Georges Tin, CRAN (Conseil Representatif des Associations Noirs)
Steve Weissman, journalist
Cornel West, professor, Center for African American Studies, Princeton University
Howard Winant, sociologist and race theorist, University of California-Santa Barbara
Cécile Winter, doctor, Collectif Politique Sida en Afrique
Lawrence Wittner, State University of New York Albany
Marie Yared, Advocacy Manager, World-Vision France