

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Event: Friday rally and march observes the one-year anniversary of the US-backed coup that overthrew the democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean Bertrand Aristide.

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Date: Friday, February 25, 2005

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Place: Pioneer Courthouse Square

Friday rally observes the one-year anniversary of the US-backed coup that overthrew the democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean Bertrand Aristide.

The *Portland Peaceful Response Coalition*'s Friday rally and march today marks the one-year anniversary of the US-backed coup that ended democracy in Haiti and returned the island to the rule of terror and violence. "Were it not for the preliminary hearings demanded by the Congressional Black Caucus, we might not know the details of how the US government, the Bush Administration, essentially kidnapped President Aristide, taking him half-way around the globe to the Central African Republic," said William Seaman, a volunteer with the PPRC. "Under threat of violent death to himself, his family and thousands of his fellow Haitians, Aristide was removed from the office that he was democratically elected to not once, but twice."

In Haiti today the interim government, headed by Gerard Latortue, has been mounting a repressive assault against Lavalas, the political party that swept Aristide to his two election victories. Leaders in the Lavalas movement have been imprisoned, assaulted and murdered. The Latortue regime has also moved to repress labor unions, peasant organizations, and individual community activists. UN mission security personnel have failed to disarm the armed gangs that continue to terrorize the population while convicted murderers have been released from prison and now take part in the repression, hunting down the witnesses who testified against them.

"His policies towards Haiti demonstrate that Bush's talk of democracy and freedom is nothing but cynical lies and profound hypocrisy," said Seaman. "We are calling for an end to the repression and a restoration of democracy for the people of Haiti." Seaman said that temporary protective status must be granted to all Haitian asylum seekers in the US, and that a full-scale congressional investigation must begin to clearly establish the role played by the Bush administration in the overthrow of Haiti's struggling democracy.

“We are asking folks to call their representatives in Washington, DC, to demand an investigation, to bring the coup-makers to account, and to restore the rule of law and respect for human rights to the people of Haiti.” Seaman said that Aristide must be allowed to return to Haiti and that Aristide and other members of Lavalas must be protected from the violence of the current illegitimate government and from the armed gangs that are carrying out the violent repression in the service of that junta.