The Complexities of Human Trafficking in Post-Earthquake Haiti: What Is the Role of Foreign Lawyers and Is Legislation the Answer?

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• Build the Rule of Law in Haiti
• Give Haiti’s Poor Their Day in Court
• Bring Haitians’ Fight for Justice to the International Community
The Complexities of Human Trafficking in Post-Earthquake Haiti

- Trafficking in Haiti (*restaveks* and crossborder)
- Impact of the earthquake on trafficking
- Government/UN solutions (draft legislation)
- Root causes of trafficking (poverty)
- Role of lawyers and advocates
Comparing the Earthquakes: Chile, Japan and Haiti

The Chile earthquake was **500 times stronger** than the Haiti earthquake.

Haiti suffered **230 times more mortality**.
Disproportionate Burden on Haiti’s Poor

Two people died in the collapse of the National Palace.

Urban Slums Home to Haiti’s Poor Majority

Tens of thousands died in the collapse of hillside slums.
Haiti’s hunger crisis is linked to policies of U.S. and International Financial Institutions.

Four main links:

1. Debt
2. Trade policies
3. “Aid”
4. Government destabilization
In the 18th century, Haiti...

...led the world in the production of sugar, coffee, rum, cotton and indigo.

...was the world’s richest colony and the busiest trade center in the New World.
1. Debt
When Haiti became independent in 1804, no other government recognized it.

France threatened to re-conquer Haiti and re-establish slavery unless Haiti agreed to pay France 150 Million francs for the loss of "property", including slaves.
Haiti could only pay the debt by borrowing from French banks at unconscionable interest rates.

The repayments were equivalent to 10 times the annual revenue of the Haitian government at the time.

The amount Haiti paid, with interest, is equivalent to $21 billion today.
2. Trade
Before 1987, Haiti grew nearly all of its own rice.
Now Haiti imports 80% of its rice from the U.S.
How Did Haiti Become So Dependent?

In 1986 the U.S. and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced Haiti to drop tariffs as a condition for urgently needed loans.

As a result, cheap subsidized U.S. rice flooded Haiti and destroyed the Haitian rice market.

Haitian farmers could not compete. The Haitian rice market collapsed and never recovered.
As a result, out-of-work farmers flooded the cities.
3. “Aid”
US AID’s primary goal in allocating foreign assistance is to “ensure that U.S. policy objectives are achieved.”

- US AID operating principles
Aid used as leverage for U.S. intervention into Haitian politics

As a condition of aid, the U.S. and IFIs force Haiti to make the following **Structural Adjustments:**

- Privatization
- Trade liberalization
- Reduced social service spending
- Opposing necessary minimum wage increases
U.S. driven policies often undermine the Haitian economy

To meet conditions of aid, Haiti’s government must divert funds from essential services:

- Health Care
- Roads
- Agriculture
- Education
4. Government Destabilization
U.S. Political Interference in Haiti

1. The U.S. withheld aid from democratically elected governments

2. The U.S. supported opposition to elected government
Addressing Root Causes

“Give a man a fish, for a day he eats... Teach a man to fish, for a lifetime he learns that there are few fish for the poor because powerful boats from powerful countries take the fish offshore leaving people from poor countries dependent on imports.”

“Teach poor people to enforce their human rights, they make society more equitable, stable, independent and prosperous forever.”
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- Sign Avaaz petition for cholera

- Financial Support