

‘We will have to start from scratch but I have no doubt about our collective ability to find the means, the energy and the determination to do so’.

Dr Jacky Lumarque, Rector Université Quisqueya, Port-au-Prince

Rough translation of mail (by Gilles Lubeth) . Courtesy Dr. Riyad Insanally, OAS. 27 January 2010.

It's my first time on the Internet since Tuesday's earthquake. My apologies to friends who may have been worried by my silence but I have been focused on rescue operations and assistance to families. I was bent on not ending rescue operations until getting confirmation that the persons we were searching for had indeed died.

Here's the situation...

I stopped searching for survivors for good and I am finally able to extract those corpses that have been identified: 5 students from the Faculty of Education, including 2 priests from the Salesiens congregation, a monk and a nun from the St Croix congregation, a lecturer, an engineer and two gardeners. We will find out this morning if there are more victims that can be identified.

The corpses are badly decomposed and we had to turn a water tank into a grave, in the botanical garden. This location will become a mausoleum dedicated to the victims of the earthquake. Bishop Dumas, members of the Don Bosco and St Croix congregations will hold a church service in memory of the victims at noon. Those who cannot be present physically will surely keep us in their affectionate thoughts.

Special thanks to students and volunteers (most of whom didn't even finish primary school) for the extraordinary courage displayed, as they work 48 hours non-stop to take about 20 survivors from the rubble, without any technical support and at risk of losing their own lives. Those who died before our eyes did not make it because of the lack of resources and equipment to move them out from under the beams and flagstones where they were crushed.

All the buildings were destroyed, including the Museum which was hosting an exhibition dedicated to the famous Haitian-born painter, Jean-Michel Basquiat, as well as three apartments for visiting lecturers at Quisqueya and the state universities. We will have to start from scratch but I have no doubt about our collective ability to find the means, the energy and the determination to do so.

For now, mobilization at Quisqueya has been directed to families in need. The Harry Truman Boulevard Campus has been used as a Center already hosting 10,000 victims from Cité l'éternel. The Gheskio Center and US doctors are assisting those who are ill or injured. We invite ALL Quisqueya Medical Faculty students to come and assist us in organizing daily life in the community and providing basic care. We will wait for the venue to be secured (fences have to be put up again) before starting distributing food, in order to avoid looting.

On the Turgeau campus, the esplanade and the parking lot will also be transformed in a care center for the victims. Since we will be located near the main drinking water reservoir in the city, we are trying to set up a small water treatment plant in order to produce 3 thousand gallons of drinking water per day, to serve residents and newly installed "colonies" in peripheral neighbourhoods (Turgeau and Debussy). *Aide et Action* is expected to get the equipment needed for the plant from the Dominican Republic. Quisqueya students are invited to form a solidarity network. Helping the more fragile among us will actually give them the strength and inspiration to rebuild their individual lives and the community.

International aid has been abundant but poorly coordinated and there are great frustrations. The population has spontaneously formed "colonies" in various areas; these groups must be helped to get organized rationally while relief efforts are channeled to those who are most in need.

Thank you to all our friends for expressing their solidarity and affection. The hardest time is still to come, when we have to rebuild and spontaneous solidarity fades away. It is up to Haitians to get organized with the help of a network of friends acting out of solidarity rather than out of the search for media visibility only.