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Haiti: Lessons must be learned from past mistakes

Only by learning from the mistakes of the multinational intervention of 10 years ago can the international community effectively protect human rights in Haiti today, Amnesty International said, calling on the UN Security Council to heed five key human rights lessons from the 1994 multinational intervention in Haiti and its aftermath as the Multinational Interim Force is deployed.

The UN Security Council has mandated the force to assist Haitian security forces "to establish and maintain public safety and law and order and to promote and protect human rights". Significantly, the resolution also states that "there will be individual accountability and no impunity for violators." On the basis of these commitments, Amnesty International urgently calls for the following:

1. that the Multinational Interim Force (MIF) commit to ensuring the disarmament of both the rebel forces and the pro-Aristide militias. The failure to disarm the disbanded Haitian military and paramilitary in 1994 has been one of the root causes of ongoing political violence in Haiti.
2. that the MIF guarantee that notorious human rights offenders with pending sentences for human rights convictions, such as rebel leaders Louis Jodel Chamblain and Jean Pierre Baptiste ('Jean Tatoune') are taken into custody and brought before the Haitian justice system.
3. that the international community ensure that under no circumstances are those convicted of or implicated in serious human rights abuses given any position of authority, whether in a transitional government or among the security forces, where they might commit additional violations.
4. that the MIF help ensure that those on all sides alleged to have committed human rights abuses during the conflict are brought to justice. Only in this way can the rule of law be fully upheld and the cycle of political violence broken.
5. that international civilian human rights monitors be deployed as a matter of urgency, in addition to multinational military and police personnel, to act as a deterrent to further abuses and to ensure that accurate and detailed human rights information is provided to inform every step of the international response to the unfolding situation in Haiti.

Background information

Currently, the USA, Canada and France have military personnel in Haiti.

In September 1995, current rebel leader Louis Jodel Chamblain was among seven senior military

and paramilitary leaders convicted in absentia and sentenced to forced labour for life for involvement in the September 1993 extrajudicial execution of Antoine Izméry, a well-known pro-democracy activist, during a public mass at a Port-au-Prince church. Chamblain had gone into exile to avoid prosecution. Chamblain was also among those convicted in absentia and sentenced to forced labour for life for participation in the 1994 Raboteau massacre.

Another of the rebel leaders, Jean Pierre Baptiste, alias "Jean Tatoune", is also a former paramilitary leader who was also sentenced to forced labour for life for participation in the 1994 Raboteau massacre. He escaped from the Gonaïves prison, where he was serving his sentence, during an August 2002 jailbreak.

Louis Jodel Chamblain and Jean Tatoune both belonged to the paramilitary organisation FRAPH, formed by military authorities who were the de facto leaders of the country following the 1991 coup against then-President Aristide. FRAPH members were responsible for numerous human rights violations before the 1994 restoration of democratic governance.

Public Document

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