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Haiti: Activist's killing shows need for disarmament programme

Bruner Esterne, President of the Grand Ravine Community Council for Human Rights, was killed by unknown individuals on 21 September 2006.

The 38-year-old activist was an eyewitness of a massacre which took place on 20 August 2005 in the Port-au-Prince's neighbourhood of Martissant, in which at least 20 people were killed and many others were injured. The massacre was allegedly perpetrated by members of the armed gang "Little Machete Army" backed by rogue police officers.

"Bruner is Haiti's latest victim of a culture of gun violence. His death demonstrates the urgent need for the government to implement a broad disarmament program," said Kerrie Howard, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Americas Programme.

Amnesty International calls on the Haitian authorities to take the necessary measures to investigate the killing of Bruner Esterne and to bring his killers and the perpetrators of the Grand Ravine and Martissant massacres to justice.

"Gun violence is taking thousands of lives across Haiti. It is time for the Haitian authorities to deal with the issue more effectively," said Kerrie Howard.

Background Information

On 20 August 2005 police officers and members of the Little Machete Army reportedly interrupted a football match at Ste-Bernadette Park in the Martissant neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince allegedly looking for 'bandits' and killed more than 20 and injured several others. During the 21 August attacks carried out in Grand Ravine by the same armed gang, Bruner Esterne's house, amongst dozens, was pillaged and set on fire.

At least five police officers allegedly involved in the stadium killings were placed in custody but were released on obscure grounds by the judge handling the case.

On 6 July 2006, the Little Army Machete attacked again the Grand Ravine neighbourhood and killed 21 persons, including women and children and torched hundreds of homes.

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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