

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety/Threats

17 February 2003

HAITI

Marie Yolène Gilles (f) staff member of *Coalition Nationale des Droits des Haïtiens*,
National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR)
Viola Robert and other members of her family

Killed:

Andy Philippe (m) aged 20]
Angélo Philippe (m) aged 20] sons of Viola Robert
Vladimir Sanon (m) aged 19]

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Marie Yolène Gilles, Coordinator of the human rights monitoring program at NCHR, Viola Robert, the mother of three brothers who were killed in December 2002 and other family members.

On the night of 7 December, three brothers Andy Philippe, Angélo Philippe and Vladimir Sanon were reportedly taken from their home in the Carrefour area of the capital Port-au-Prince by local police officers. Their bodies were later found in the morgue with bullet wounds to the head. Following an internal investigation by the Haitian National Police (HNP), the municipal police commissioner was reportedly sacked and three other officers taken into custody. Another officer reportedly went into hiding in order to avoid arrest. Some reports indicate that a potential witness was killed by hooded men on 17 December in Carrefour.

Marie Yolène Gilles is the principal member of NCHR working on the murder case of three young men. She has been instrumental in speaking out against the HNP officers implicated in the crime. As a result she has been receiving anonymous threatening phone calls at her home. She has been warned that if she continues to be too active in the Carrefour case, her house will be burned down and she will be killed. On 11 February 2003, and on two occasions on 15 February, a number of armed men stood outside her house and shot in the air.

NCHR have been responsible for hiding Viola Robert, the mother of the three brothers, and her immediate family. Members of the family who still remain in Carrefour have been subjected to threats and intimidation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders and journalists are increasingly at risk in Haiti. Since the killing of prominent radio journalist and long-time democracy and human rights activist Jean Dominique in April 2000, freedom of expression has been severely undermined and a number of journalists and human rights defenders have been attacked or killed. On 22 February 2002, Patrick Merisier, a radio broadcaster and human rights worker also from NCHR was shot in the chest and arm by two men as he waited to be served in a restaurant in Port-au-Prince. Prior to this, in January 2002 he had received anonymous threats that he would be killed if he did not stop his human rights monitoring and broadcasts. (See UA 76/02, AMR 36/003/2002, 13 March 2002). In March 2002, NCHR field monitor Berthony Philippe reportedly received threats which caused him to go into hiding. In November 2001, NCHR staff were amongst the human rights defenders who reported receiving death threats after they published an open letter to the directors of the police, denouncing police brutality and illegal killings

NCHR is a member of the umbrella organisation *Plateforme des Organisations Haïtiennes des Droits de l'Homme* (Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French or Haitian Créole or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Marie Yolène Gilles, Viola Robert and the family members of the three victims of the Carrefour murder;

- reminding the authorities that they have a duty to protect them;
- urging the authorities to fully investigate the killings of, Andy Philippe, Angélo Philippe and Vladimir Sanon and to support local police and justice officials in ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to publicly declare their recognition of the important role of human rights defenders and to remind all Haitians, that efforts to curb or hinder their work will not be tolerated.
- urging the Haitian government to adhere to its obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declarations of Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolution of the Organisation of American States (OAS)

APPEALS TO: *Please note that if you have difficulties in sending faxes, please send by airmail.*

Director General of the Haitian National Police

M. Jean Nesly Lucien
Grand Quartier Général de la Police
12 rue Oscar Pacot
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telegram: Directeur general de la Police Nationale d'Haiti, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Fax: +509 245 7374 (if someone answers, say "La ligne de fax s'il vous plaît")
Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur

Minister of Justice and Public Security

Monsieur Jean Baptiste Brown
Ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité Publique
Ministère de la Justice
19 Avenue Charles Sumner
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telegram: Ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité Publique, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Fax: +509 245 0474 (if someone answers, say "La ligne de fax s'il vous plaît")
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

President of the Republic of Haiti

S.E. Monsieur Jean Bertrand Aristide
Présidence de la République d=Haïti
Palais National
Champ de Mars
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telegram: Président de la Republique d'Haiti, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Fax: +509 228 2320
Salutation: Monsieur le Président

COPIES TO:

National Coalition for Haitian Rights
#9, Rue Rivière
Port-au-Prince, Delmas 71, Haiti

Fax: +509 244 4146 (if someone answers, "La ligne de fax s'il vous plaît")
E-mail: nchr@haiti.maf.net

Plateforme Haïtienne des Droits Humains (Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations)
Impasse Senghor
Martin Luther King, dernière maison
Nazon, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Fax: +509 245 6398

and to diplomatic representatives of Haiti accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 March 2003