

Haiti: No justice for Jean Dominique, no real rule of law

Two years after journalist Jean Dominique and radio station guard Jean Claude Louissaint were shot dead, Haitian authorities must take concrete action to bring those responsible to justice, Amnesty International said in a report published today.

"If those responsible for these killings are not identified and tried in a prompt, impartial and transparent fashion, Haiti's aspirations to the rule of law will be irreparably damaged," the organization declared.

Targeted killings of journalists, regardless of their political beliefs or personal histories, have a far-reaching detrimental impact within any society. The fact that Jean Dominique, fierce critic of successive regimes over a period of 40 years, was killed under a democratically-elected government, made the deaths all the more disturbing.

"The investigation has been hampered by obstacle after obstacle, in effect denying the families of Jean Dominique and Jean Claude Louissaint, and Haitian society as a whole, the right to know the truth, and to see those responsible held to account," Amnesty International said.

The obstacles to the investigation have included lack of independence of the police force and the judiciary; the failure of those institutions to confront ruling party activists who flout the law; violence by armed groups acting under the auspices of elected officials; repression of freedom of speech and targeted threats and attacks on journalists.

"These obstacles are symptomatic of the primary human rights concerns in Haiti today," Amnesty International stressed. "Their cumulative outcome has been total impunity for those responsible for the deaths of Jean Dominique and Jean Claude Louissaint."

"Full and impartial justice for Jean Dominique and Jean Claude Louissaint will demonstrate, not only the authorities' commitment to justice for those two individuals, but their willingness to confront head on the most problematic and

entrenched hindrances to the respect for human rights in Haiti," Amnesty International continued.

"Failure to do so, on the other hand, will do irretrievable harm to the aspirations of those Haitians committed to an end to impunity and the establishment of genuine rule of law," the organization concluded.

**** Today, on the eve of the anniversary of Jean Dominique's killing, Amnesty International is releasing a report on the case: Haiti -- "I have no weapon but my journalist's trade": human rights and the Jean Dominique investigation. The report will be available on the web at:**

<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/AMR360012002>

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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>