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## **Haiti: a worrying increase in violence against the police force**

**Port-au-Prince, 18 October** -- Amnesty International, which currently has a delegation in Haiti looking into the overall situation of respect for human rights in the country, is concerned about a series of attacks on police in Port-au-Prince.

The latest two attacks occurred following the 7 October 1999 resignation of *Sécretaire d'Etat à la Sécurité publique* (Interior Minister) Robert Manuel.

“These events have taken place against a background of a reported campaign to undermine the neutrality and effectiveness of the young national police force, charged in addition to its basic law and order mandate with providing a climate of security for the upcoming legislative elections in March 2000,” a member of Amnesty International’s delegation said.

On 14 October, around 9:30 pm, the *Directeur de la Police judiciaire* (Head of the Police), *Commissaire divisionnaire* (Police Superintendent) Mario Andresol narrowly escaped an assassination attempt near his home in the Delmas area of Port-au-Prince. According to reports, as Commissaire Andresol approached his home, armed men in a speeding car opened fire on his vehicle, reportedly hitting it with at least five bullets. The Commissaire managed to escape.

Commissaire Andresol’s department is responsible for the investigation into the 8 October 1999 killing of *ex-Forces Armées d’Haiti* (Haitian Army) Colonel Jean Lamy by unidentified armed men in what appeared to be a well-organized attack. The victim, reportedly an adviser to the *Police nationale d’Haiti* (Haitian National Police), had been mentioned as a possible replacement for Robert Manuel; his killing occurred within 24 hours of the former’s resignation.

“These attacks occurred in an increasingly violent climate in Haiti,” Amnesty International added pointing out that 18 police officers have been killed since the beginning of 1999.

Amnesty International is concerned that the reversal of efforts to construct a professional and independent police force could have a serious impact on the capacity of the *Police nationale d’Haiti* to ensure respect for human rights, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections.

Amnesty International calls on the government of President Preval and Prime Minister Alexis to take all steps necessary to reinforce the ability of the Haitian National Police to fulfill its professional tasks in an independent, neutral and impartial manner.

It also urges the government to guarantee that full and transparent police and judicial investigations into the recent attacks be carried out so that the perpetrators may be brought to justice.

Finally, Amnesty International urges the *Police nationale d'Haiti*, while investigating these attacks, to act within its own as well as internationally-recognized codes of conduct for law enforcement officers.

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**For further information, please call the press office at Amnesty International in London on + 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website <http://www.amnesty.org>**