

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 36/001/2003

UA 03/03

Fear for safety/Death Threats

06 January 2003

HAITI

**Michèle Montas (f), radio journalist
Staff at Radio Haïti Inter station**

Killed: Maxime Séide (m), aged 26, security guard

An attempt was made on the life of Michèle Montas, a prominent radio journalist and widow of assassinated journalist, Jean Dominique on 25 December 2002. Her security guard Maxime Séide was killed in the attack at her home in Pétionville, north of the capital Port-au-Prince. There are concerns for her safety and that of her staff at Radio Haïti Inter station.

Michèle Montas had just arrived home between 5:30 and 6pm when she heard the sound of the outside gate of her home being forcefully closed. This was immediately followed by gunfire. A security guard entered the house and told her that two armed men had threatened him and Maxime Séide. The armed men had instructed them to stand aside so that they could enter the property. The security guard instead slammed the gate in order to shut them out. Maxime Séide was trapped outside, where he was attacked and killed by the two assailants who then fled.

Jean Dominique was assassinated by unidentified gunmen outside Radio Haïti Inter station in April 2000. Since his death, Michèle Montas has pushed tirelessly for those responsible for his death to be identified and brought to justice. She and staff at Radio Haïti Inter station have since received numerous death threats.

The investigation into Jean Dominique's death has been impeded by numerous obstacles, and judges, police officers and activists associated with it have received threats. The fourth investigating magistrate responsible for the inquiry is about to submit his report, upon which any prosecutions will be based. Amnesty International believes that this crucial stage in the investigation into Jean Dominique's death may have increased the safety risk for Michèle Montas and Radio Haïti Inter staff.

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 increasingly undermined and a number of journalists and human rights defenders have been attacked or killed.

In one example, on 12 October 2001 Radio Haïti Inter journalist Jean Robert Delciné was assaulted and threatened by police officers after investigating the alleged killing of a young man, Mackenson Fleurimon, by police officers in the Cité Soleil area of Port-au-Prince. The police inspector implicated refused to respond to summonses from the prosecutor and from the force's internal investigative unit.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Michèle Montas and Radio Haïti Inter staff;
- urging the authorities to promptly and thoroughly investigate the 25 December attack on Michèle Montas and the killing of Maxime Séide and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the Haitian authorities to fulfill the promises of Prime Minister Yvon Neptune for increased security for Michèle Montas and Radio Haïti Inter staff;

- urging the justice authorities, per President Jean Bertrand Aristide's public declaration, to promptly issue the findings of the magistrate's inquiry into the killing of Jean Dominique, so that those found to be implicated can be immediately brought to justice.

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

S.E. Monsieur Jean Bertrand Aristide
Président de la République d=Haïti
Présidence de la République d=Haïti
Palais National
Champ de Mars
Port-au-Prince
HAÏTI
Fax: (509) 223 0241

Monsieur Yvon Neptune
Premier Ministre
Villa d=Accueil
Delmas 60, Musseau
Port-au-Prince
HAÏTI
Fax: (509) 245 1624

Monsieur Monsieur Calixte Delatour
Ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité Publique
Ministère de la Justice
19 Avenue Charles Sumner
Port-au-Prince
HAÏTI
Fax: (509) 245 0474 (Please ask for the fax tone)

Emails may also be sent care of the Haitian Embassy in the USA, to the following address:
embassy@haiti.org

COPIES TO:

Radio Haïti-Inter
Boîte Postale 737
522 Delmas 66 a
Port-au-Prince
HAITI
Fax: (509)257 3399
E-mail: radiohaiti@acn2.net

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 17 February 2003.