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Haiti: Justice and liberties at risk

The climate of respect for human rights being established in Haiti since the end of the military regime has been dealt a series of blows, Amnesty International said today, launching a new report on the country.

“Efforts to overcome the legacies of the past and to promote greater respect for human rights must continue, and past gains must be safeguarded,” the organization said.

“Much remains to be done in the way of building a fair, independent and impartial judiciary trusted by the public and ensuring the independence and accountability of the police force -- both of which are essential traits of a system in which human rights are truly respected.”

Amnesty International is calling on the Haitian authorities to take all appropriate steps to undertake a reform of the judicial system which is largely dysfunctional, under-resourced, and vulnerable to external pressures, and to ensure the professionalism and accountability of the police.

The report, incorporating the findings of a recent research mission, outlines human rights concerns in the context of the up-coming elections. It also includes reports of human rights violations by the police and the impact of the lack of an independent, impartial and accessible justice. In addition, the report addresses issues related to the prison system and the situation of human rights defenders.

Amnesty International appreciates that the scale of human rights violations is significantly smaller than under the military regime, and that some efforts are being made to investigate past and present violations and to improve the justice system. However, unless action is taken urgently, progress on human rights issues in Haiti is seriously at risk.

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To obtain a copy of the report, *Haiti, Unfinished business: Justice and liberties at risk*, or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on + 44 171 413 5562.