

News Service: 074/99
AI INDEX: AMR 36/04/99
22 April 1999

Haiti: Raboteau massacre-- 5 years on, time for justice

Five years after the Raboteau massacre, justice has still to be done, Amnesty International said today on the 5th anniversary of the killing of between 20 and 50 people at the hands of the Haitian military in Raboteau, Gonaïves.

“The Haitian Government has a duty to end impunity for killers by bringing those responsible for the massacre to justice,” the organization added.

Amnesty International welcomes the efforts made by the authorities to try those suspected of involvement in the massacre. These efforts have included unsuccessful attempts to extradite several suspects from Honduras, Panama and the USA, and the detention of just over two dozen people currently facing charges -- including murder -- in connection with the massacre.

However, lack of resources and a failure by the Haitian government to establish a strong legal framework, based on international human rights standards, have hindered trial preparations. In addition, several members of the judiciary involved in the case have resigned.

Amnesty International is urging the Haitian government to make sure that the Raboteau trial takes place and adheres to international standards and to take all possible steps to guarantee the safety of those involved in the trial -- victims, witnesses, court officials, lawyers and defendants.

“If not tackled with urgency, the failure to ensure an effective justice system may have dire consequences for the respect and protection of human rights,” Amnesty International said. “Upholding justice and the rule of law must be an integral part of the fight against impunity.”

“Foreign governments have an obligation to assist the Haitian authorities to ensure that suspected human rights violators are returned to Haiti and receive a fair trial,” Amnesty International said. The organization added that such assistance could include the provision of any evidence in their possession or of appropriate legal expertise to help in the preparation and holding of the trial.

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