

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please bring this action to the attention of the person responsible for religious outreach work in your section.

EXTRA 15/92 Legal Concern

18 February 1992

HAITI Father Jean-Yvon MASSACRE

Amnesty International is concerned at the arrest on 14 February 1992, allegedly without a warrant, of Father Jean-Yvon Massacre, a Roman Catholic priest from the diocese of Fermat, a suburb of Port-au-Prince.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Fr. Jean-Yvon Massacre was at a petrol station near Croix-des-Bouquets, east of Port-au-Prince, on the morning of 14 February 1992 when a pick-up carrying several soldiers also pulled into the petrol station.

Fr. Massacre reportedly spoke to the soldiers, and told them his name. One of the soldiers, on hearing his name, accused him of being the priest who has been criticizing the army over the radio. Fr. Massacre had spoken on the radio on several occasions criticizing both the new government and the armed forces. The soldiers reportedly said that they were going to teach him a lesson. He was then seized and forcibly taken by the soldiers to the Croix-des-Bouquets military barracks close to the petrol station. Later, at approximately 3.00 pm, Fr. Massacre was seen being taken out of a military pick-up in front of the cathedral in Port-au-Prince and being put into a taxi accompanied by several soldiers.

Later that evening Fr. Massacre was transferred to the Pénitencier National (National Penitentiary), where he is still held. The authorities denied any access to Fr. Massacre until Sunday 16 February, when members of the clergy were permitted to visit him. It is reported that he has not been ill-treated in custody.

Fr. Massacre was due to appear before a judge on 17 February, but this did not happen, reportedly because the army said that they did not have a vehicle to transport him to the court.

Amnesty International is concerned that Fr. Massacre may have been arrested solely because of the exercise of his freedom of expression.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In a coup on the night of 29 to 30 September, troops overthrew the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had taken office in Haiti on 7 February 1991. Since then Amnesty International has learned of widespread human rights violations committed by the security forces, including a large number of extrajudicial executions, torture and ill-treatment and mass arrests without warrant. These abuses have been carried out by uniformed agents of the security forces, or on some occasions, by men in civilian clothes ostensibly linked to them.

Amnesty International is concerned that members of the church who are real or perceived supporters of President Aristide are being targeted by the armed forces. Many Roman Catholic priests reportedly went into hiding shortly after the coup. Lay Christian workers and members of church-sponsored development organizations have also been targeted. At least eight priests, one nun and eight members of church groups have been arrested, and many more have been threatened and harrassed by soldiers. (See Haiti: The Human Rights Tragedy - Human rights violations since the coup, AI Index: AMR 36/03/92 of January 1992).

Fr. Massacre's name was among a list of individuals and organizations broadcast on 15 December 1991 by a clandestine Haitian radio station. In the broadcast, the speaker called on members of the former duvalierist militia, the Tontons Macoutes to assassinate the supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Also included in the list was Fr. Jean Juste. Several days later, on 18 December, the residence of Fr. Jean Juste was reportedly broken into by soldiers, who beat other members of his household when they could not locate Fr. Jean Juste. (See UA 455/91, AMR 36/38/91, 19 December 1991 and follow-up AMR 36/02/92 of 9 January 1992).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes:

- expressing concern at the reported arrest of Roman Catholic priest, Father Jean-Yvon Massacre, apparently because of the exercise of his freedom of expression;
- asking for information as to the reasons for his arrest and for clarification of his legal situation;
- asking that he be treated humanely in custody.

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APPEALS TO (please note that all mail to Haiti appears to have been temporarily suspended. Please do not send any letters. Electricity supplies are also limited so if you do not succeed in sending your fax or telex, do try again)

1) Prime Minister:

Maître Jean-Jacques HONORAT

Premier Ministre,

Ministre des Affaires Etrangères
Présidence de la République de Haïti
Palais National, Port-au-Prince,
Haïti

**Telegrams: Premier Ministre Honorat,
Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

Faxes: + 509 22 1147

**Salutation: Monsieur le Premier
Ministre / Dear Prime Minister**

2) Commander in Chief of the Armed
Forces:

Monsieur le Général Raoul CEDRAS

Commandant-en-Chef des Forces Armées
d'Haïti
Grand Quartier Général des Forces
Armées d'Haïti

Rue Geffrard, Port-au-Prince, Haïti

**Telegrams: Comandant-en-Chef des
Forces Armees Cedras, Port-au-Prince,
Haiti**

Telephone: + 509 22 3935

Telexes: 20391 gqfadh

Faxes: + 509 23 9007

**Salutation: Monsieur le General / Dear
General**

3) Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Antoine LECONTE

Ministère de la Justice

Cité de l'Exposition

Port au Prince, Haïti

Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice

Leconte, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telephone: + 509 45 0474 or 45 1626

Telexes: 20166 Justice

4. Minister of the Interior:

M le Colonel Gracia JEAN

Ministre de l'Intérieur

et de la Defense National

Palais des Ministères

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur

Jean, Port au Prince, Haiti

COPIES TO:

Newspaper:

Haiti Progrès

1398 Flatbush Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11210, USA

and to diplomatic representatives of Haiti in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 March 1992.