

HAITI

@Human Rights Violations in the Aftermath of the Coup d'Etat, October 1991

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at reports of widespread human rights violations committed by the Haitian security forces since a *coup d'état* that deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Monday 30 September. These violations included a large number of extrajudicial executions, beatings and mass arrests without warrant. In a letter to Brigadier General Raoul Cédras, Head of the Haitian Armed Forces, on 4 October, Amnesty International urged him to send clear instructions to the security forces to put a stop to human rights violations, to open thorough investigations into those that have occurred and to bring the perpetrators to justice. With regard to reports of mass arrests by the armed forces, Amnesty International asked General Cédras to ensure that the physical safety of those arrested be guaranteed while in custody, that they be given prompt access to families and lawyers, be brought promptly before a judicial authority, and be released without delay unless charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

Reports of extrajudicial executions include the killing, on Monday 30 September, of Radio Caraïbe Director Jacques Caraïbe, after a group of soldiers arrived at his house, severely beat him in the presence of his family, and took him away to an unknown destination. His dead body was later found.

According to the information received by Amnesty International security force agents have deliberately shot a large number of civilians in different sectors of Port-au-Prince, resulting in hundreds of dead and wounded. One such incident is reported to have taken place on 2 October in Cité Soleil, when soldiers shot and killed at least 30 people and wounded many more, apparently in reprisal for an earlier attack by a crowd on the police post in which at least two policemen were killed. In another incident, approximately 30 to 40 people are reported to have been killed in the area of Lamentin 54, reportedly in reprisal for the death of a soldier killed by an angry crowd. Reports have indicated that soldiers burst into many houses in the Lamentin 54 neighbourhood and shot dead some of the inhabitants, forcing others to bury the dead. Seventeen-year-old Jacques Séus Jean-Gilles was reportedly killed and five other people wounded in an attack by the security forces on the premises of Lafanmi Selavi orphanage in Port-au-Prince on 1 October. In Gonaïves, six people were reportedly shot dead by the security forces, after demonstrators set up barricades in different points of the city. Amnesty International has also received reports that scores of people, many of whom were demonstrating in support of President Aristide, were indiscriminately and deliberately shot at by military personnel riding Jeeps in different areas of the capital in the past week. Unconfirmed reports have stated that the security forces were also shooting at ambulances in the streets of Port-au-Prince, so as to prevent treatment of the wounded.

Amnesty International is further concerned at reports of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by the security forces in the past days. According to information received by the organization, some of the people who were at the National Palace with President Aristide on Monday 30 September, including Captain Danny Toussaint, and the Chief of Police Pierre Chérubin, were subjected to beatings and threatened with death by the security forces. In another incident the son of Senator Wesner Emmanuel was reportedly arrested by the police in Carrefour, and severely beaten at the police post there. He was released shortly afterwards. Amnesty International has also received reports that the security forces have ill-treated a number of La Savanne dwellers in Les Cayes.

Other reports of concern to Amnesty International include the mass arrest without warrant of scores of youths in the districts of Carrefour and Carrefour Feuille by uniformed military men and armed civilians. In another reported incident, on the evening of Thursday 3 October soldiers forcibly entered many houses in the Delmas 32 area, taking away the youth. No news of their whereabouts has emerged. Amnesty International has also received as reports of similar arrests in La Savanne area of Les Cayes and other parts of the country.

Further, Amnesty International is concerned at reports that soldiers searching for officials of the government of President Aristide or his supporters, have forcefully entered and damaged, the houses of several, including those of Minister of Information Marie-Laurence Jocelyn-Lassègue, Minister of Finance Marie-Michèle Rey and Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul, all of whom reportedly went into hiding. Evans Paul was later arrested at the Maïs Gaté airport on 7 October, where he sought to meet a delegation of the Organization of American States holding talks with Brigadier General Cédras. Evans Paul was also scheduled to leave with four other prominent politicians to Venezuela for talks with President Carlos Andrés Pérez. Eyewitness accounts have stated that he was severely beaten. He was reportedly subsequently released.

Amnesty International has also heard that several radio stations, including Radio Haïti International, Radio Cacique and Radio Caraïbe, were attacked by soldiers in order to force them to stop broadcasting. On Friday 4 October soldiers reportedly attacked Radio Lumière. Five staff members of the radio were wounded as a result of the attack. Radio Nationale director Michel Favard had been arrested by soldiers on 29 September, after a broadcast warning of a military coup. He was subsequently released.

Amnesty International's concerns under the Administration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Amnesty International's concerns under the Administration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide related to the imprisonment and the prolonged detention without due procedures of political opponents or members of previous administrations, and the extreme length of judicial proceedings of political prisoners, such as Serge Beaulieu, director of Radio Liberté, arrested in January 1991. Another matter of concern to the organization was the reported non conformity of the trial of those who took part in the attempted coup attempt led by former Duvalierist minister Roger Lafontant, to internationally recognized standards of fair trial. Roger Lafontant was killed on Monday 30 September within the compound of the National Penitentiary. An arrest has reportedly been made in connection with this killing.

Under the administration of President Aristide reports of ill-treatment upon arrest of detainees by the security force considerably decreased; nevertheless, Amnesty International continued to hear reports of such incidents. Prison conditions under President Aristide, as under all previous administrations, continued to be harsh, and reports of beatings of prisoners by prison guards continued to emerge. However, some measures were taken in order to improve conditions at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince, such as providing some additional budget for food.

Amnesty International was also concerned that the government may have condoned acts of violence carried out by angry crowds against those considered to be opposed to the government. In one such incident, in August 1991, deputy Josué Lafrance from Port-de-Paix was reportedly beaten and threatened with death by "necklacing" (known as "*père Lebrun*", in Haiti - a tyre is placed around the victim's neck and set on fire) by a crowd, as he was about to enter Parliament, where Prime Minister René Préval was to face a vote of no confidence. Other members of Parliament were reportedly threatened on the same occasion.