



PROTECT GIRLS IN DOMESTIC SERVICE IN HAITI

AI INDEX: AMR 36/007/2009

Sign this petition to urge the Haitian authorities to establish protective measures for girls in domestic service.

We, the undersigned, wish to express our concern about the ill treatment and abuses suffered by girls in domestic service in Haiti. It is estimated that there are more than 100,000 girls aged between six and 17 working in domestic service in Haiti. The UN has categorised their situation as a form of modern slavery.

Children in domestic service often come from extremely poor backgrounds and live with a host family undertaking most of the domestic chores in return for their board and lodging. They are pejoratively known as “restaveks” from the French “rester avec” literally meaning “to stay with”. They are frequently exploited, ill treated and denied their right to education, healthcare and food.

Girls are also at grave risk of physical abuse and sexual violence. Sexual violence is pervasive and widespread in Haiti. This particularly affects young girls as more than half of all those who report being raped are 18 or younger. Girls in domestic service are isolated from the rest of the society with virtually no one concerned for their welfare and being dependent on their host family it makes difficult to break free from the abuse.

Haitian laws do not provide a protective framework for children. Although the State ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1997 and the International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2007, it has failed to integrate them into national law.

On the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child we urge the Haitian parliament to honour its commitment to the rights of the child expressed through Haiti’s ratification of international instruments by establishing protective measures for girls in domestic service and to take the necessary steps towards the eradication of the “restavek” system.

We, the undersigned, call on the Haitian parliament to:

- Reform national legislation in order to bring it into line with Haiti’s international obligations, in particular under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour;
- Adopt and promote, without delay, a Children’s Code to enshrine the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child into Haitian law;
- Adopt without delay special legislation for the protection of women and girls against all forms of gender-based violence and allocate adequate resources in forthcoming national budgets for the enforcement of this legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Please send all signatures collected by 31 January to the Caribbean Team at the IS (Caribbean@amnesty.org or 1, Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom) who will deliver them to the Haitian authorities during their next visit to the country.

After this date please send them to the Haitian embassy in your country.

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