

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Excessive use of force

29 April 2005

HAITI

Peaceful demonstration by supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide who are also known as *Lavalas* supporters. They are due to take part in a peaceful demonstration in the capital Port-au-Prince on 30 April. Haitian National Police officers (HNP) reportedly used live ammunition against *Lavalas* supporters as they peacefully demonstrated near the United Nations (UN) Mission headquarters in Bourdon, Port-au-Prince on 27 April. At least 5 people were reportedly killed and scores of others wounded.

On 27 April, demonstrators were reportedly marching peacefully towards the UN Mission headquarters, when they were targeted by masked HNP officers wearing black and blue uniforms. The police officers who were travelling in three police vehicles allegedly opened fire on those at the end of the march. At least 5 people were killed at the site, while 4 others reportedly died later from their wounds. Several other people, including demonstrators and bystanders were wounded.

It is believed that a lack of supervision of the demonstration by officials belonging to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the excessive use of force by members of the HNP resulted in the tragic events of 27 April. HNP officers have reportedly been involved in several summary and unlawful killings that still remain unresolved and whose perpetrators have not been held accountable to this day.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

More than a year after a transitional government was put in place in Haiti, following the ousting of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide by an armed rebellion, the human rights situation in the country has seriously deteriorated. Since September 2004, violence has escalated to worrying proportions and the number of those killed according to recent reports exceeds 600. This is despite the presence of a nearly 7,000 strong UN contingent, including Civilian Police officers (CIVPOL) from over 50 countries, mandated to secure the country and protect the population.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French, Spanish or your own language:

- urging the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to provide adequate supervision and protection to demonstrators at a peaceful march in the capital Port-au-Prince on 30 April 2005;
- calling on MINUSTAH to provide protection at all peaceful demonstrations and reminding them that their mandate includes specific provisions to "protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence."
- calling on Civilian Police (CIVPOL) to oversee Haitian National Police officers (HNP) operations with particular attention to those aimed at controlling crowds;
- expressing deep concern that the police used excessive force against *Lavalas* supporters on 27 April demonstrators;
- calling for an independent and impartial inquiry into the excessive use of force, including killings, by the police, which violated the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the use of force and Firearms by the Law Enforcement Officials.

APPEALS TO:

UN Special Representative

Mr Juan Gabriel Valdés

Special Representative of the Secretary-General

Fax: + 509 244 3512
Salutation: Dear Special Representative Valdés

UN Military Commander in Haiti

Lt. General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira

Email: pereira17@un.org
Salutation: Dear Lt. General Pereira

Commissioner of CIVPOL - the UN Civilian Police in Haiti

Mr David Beer

Police Commissioner

Fax: + 509 244 9366
Email: beer@un.org
Salutation: Dear Commissioner Beer

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister

Monsieur Gérard Latortue

Fax: + 509 249 5561
Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre/ Dear Prime Minister

National Police Director

Monsieur Léon Charles

Fax: + 509 245 7374
Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur/ Dear Director

and to diplomatic representatives of Haiti accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. All appeals must arrive by 30 April 2005.