

EXTERNAL

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Fear of Torture / Ill-treatment

18 February 1998

**HAITISimon Bellony and some 30 others detained in and around Mirebalais since
5 February**

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that several people who were detained on or since 5 February 1998, in connection with an incident in which the chief of the *Police nationale d'Haïti* (PNH), Haitian National Police, in Mirebalais was lynched by an angry mob, have been ill-treated.

Police reinforcements were brought in to restore order after the lynching. They included members of the *Compagnie d'intervention et de maintien de l'ordre* (CIMO), Intervention and Maintenance of Order Force, from the capital and the regional branch of CIMO, known as UDMO, all of whom reportedly wear black uniforms. Arrests were made in Mirebalais, Lascahobas and Sant d'Eau, all in the Département du Centre. As of 16 February, 32 people were reportedly in detention in Mirebalais police station. Most are believed to be members of *Mete Lod Nan Dezod* (MLD), Putting Order into Disorder, a group which reportedly supports *Famille Lavalas* (FL), Lavalas Family, a political organization founded in 1996 by former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

According to reports, several of those detained have claimed that they were beaten by police officers in black uniforms at the time of arrest and during interrogation. Several are reported to be in a poor state, including Simon Bellony, who is reportedly directly implicated in the killing of the police chief. At least three others were at one point taken to Mirebalais hospital by police. Most of the detainees are believed to have been permitted visits from relatives. A team of observers working with the joint UN/OAS International Civilian Mission in Haiti have also had access to them.

Amnesty International fears that the detainees and others who might be arrested in connection with the incident may be at risk of further ill-treatment and is calling on the Haitian authorities to take steps to ensure that their physical integrity is guaranteed while in detention. It is also calling for a full independent investigation into the allegations of ill-treatment, so that those found responsible may be brought to justice.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 5 February 1998 MLD members gathered outside Mirebalais police station to protest the arrest of another MLD member. The police started firing their weapons although there are conflicting reports of whether they fired into the air or directly at the crowd, some of whom were also reportedly armed. One passerby was shot dead, and a member of the crowd was shot in the leg. The angry crowd entered the police station and killed the Mirebalais police chief, cutting off his head with a machete and burning his body. They also burned vehicles, destroyed equipment and police records, and released detainees from the police cells and nearby prison.

Haiti has been undergoing a political crisis since June 1997. Tensions between different political groups are running high. The last few months have seen a marked increase in killings, some of which may be politically-motivated, including incidents of popular justice. Police officers, several of whom have also been killed, have been frequently accused of serious human rights violations, including allegations of ill-treatment and torture and possible extrajudicial executions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French or your own language:

- expressing condolences for the death of the Mirebalais police chief;
- expressing concern at reports that several of those detained in the aftermath of the incident that led to his death were ill-treated at the time of arrest or when being questioned by police in black uniforms;
- requesting that the physical integrity of the detainees be guaranteed while in detention and that they be granted immediate access to all necessary medical treatment;
- requesting that an independent and impartial investigation be carried out into the allegations of ill-treatment and that those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

S.E. Monsieur René PRÉVAL

Président de la République de Haïti

Présidence de la République de Haïti

Palais National

Champ de Mars

Port-au-Prince

Telegrams: President Préval, Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Fax: + 509 23-2530

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République

Chief of Police

Monsieur Pierre Denizé

Directeur général de la Police nationale d'Haïti

Grand quartier général

12 rue Oscar

Port-au-Prince

Haïti

Telegrams: Directeur général PNH, Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Fax: + 509 45-73 74

Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur général

Inspector General of Police (in charge of investigating police abuses)

Monsieur Luc Eucher Joseph

Inspecteur général de la Police nationale d'Haïti

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Haïti

Telegrams: Inspecteur général PNH, Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Tel/Fax:+ 509 45-9256

Salutation: Monsieur l'Inspecteur général

COPIES TO:

Head of the Compagnie d'intervention et de maintien d'ordre (CIMO)

Monsieur Carel C. Alexandre

Sous-Commissariat de l'Antigang

Champs de Mars

Port-au-Prince

Haïti

Human Rights Organization

Plate-forme des Organisations Haïtiennes des Droits de l'Homme
Casier Postal 19181
Port-au-Prince
Haïti

and to diplomatic representatives of HAITI accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 April 1998.