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Haiti: killing of Jean Dominique must not go unpunished

One year on from the killing of prominent Haitian radio journalist and longtime advocate of human rights, Jean Dominique, the circumstances of his death have yet to be clarified and those responsible brought to justice, Amnesty International said today.

Jean Dominique was shot dead on 3 April 2000 by unknown assailants who waited for him outside the courtyard of his radio station, Radio Haiti Inter. Station guard Jean Claude Louissaint was killed with him.

Jean Dominique, an outspoken advocate of change during the Duvalier period, had continued to publicly draw attention to anti-democratic tendencies within diverse sectors of the Haitian political scene and society.

"The fact that this well-known activist with unquestionable credentials in the struggle to build a better Haiti was killed under a democratically-elected government raised questions about the state of respect for the rule of law and human rights in Haiti," Amnesty International said.

"The Haitian authorities must make every effort to guarantee that full, prompt and impartial justice is done in the killings of Jean Dominique and Jean Claude Louissaint," the organization added.

A call for the cycle of impunity overshadowing the Haitian justice system to be broken and for those responsible for the deaths to be brought to justice was made on 3 March 2001 through an open letter to

President Jean Bertrand Aristide broadcast by Radio Haiti Inter, backed by numerous Haitian and international organizations. In a subsequent visit to the station, President Aristide publicly committed his efforts to ensure that nothing impede the full, independent and impartial functioning of the justice system in the case.

Background

The killings of Jean Dominique and Jean Claude Louissaint caused a great deal of fear, tension and self-censorship, especially as they were followed by a series of acts of intimidation and threats against other journalists. At the same time, civil society has reacted forcefully, with thousands of people throughout the country repeatedly taking to the streets to show their support for efforts to bring those responsible for the killings to justice. Backed by strong public concern, the investigating judge responsible for the case has overcome several obstacles impeding a full investigation into the events.

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