

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Haiti: Violence in St Raphael plantation must be investigated**

Reports of human rights violations committed in the context of recent violence at the Guacimal orange plantation in St. Raphael, department of the North, must be investigated and those responsible brought to justice, Amnesty International said today as news emerged of the death of at least two elderly trade unionists during clashes at the plantation on 27 May.

On that morning, a group of Guacimal plantation workers accompanied by members of the Batay Ouvriye trade union federation and two local journalists arrived at the plantation, which has been the scene of ongoing threats and violence between workers attempting to unionize and plantation owners and their supporters, who reportedly include some local officials.

According to Batay Ouvriye supporters, they came to carry out the usual seasonal practice of allocating plots of land to workers for cultivation of basic foodstuffs. Local authorities and representatives of the plantation owners have disputed this version, describing the activity as a land invasion.

In the ensuing violence guns and other weapons were used and two elderly members of Batay Ouvriye were reportedly attacked and hacked to death. A number of those present during the confrontation were said to have been injured, including some local officials and two journalists. The journalists were among seven participants in the workers' initial march who were subsequently arrested by police.

The seven were transferred to Port-au-Prince and are currently being held in the National Penitentiary. The two journalists have reportedly not been given the urgent specialized medical care they need to treat their injuries. The authorities have not made it clear on what charges the seven are being held, although they have now been detained for four days; the St. Raphael mayor has allegedly accused them of being 'terrorists.'

"Once again, the rhetoric of 'terrorism' is being used to violate basic human rights, including the right to be notified of charges and to have access to medical care in detention. This is not acceptable," Amnesty International said.

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