

PUBLIC

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14 February 2006

UA 37/06 Fear for safety/Possible excessive use of force

HAITI Demonstrators in Port-au-Prince

The alleged fatal shooting on 13 February of a demonstrator during protests against the results of recent elections has heightened tensions in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The man's death has been attributed by protestors to members of the United Nations Stabilisation Force in Haiti (MINUSTAH) who they have accused of firing at the crowd of demonstrators. The UN organization, however, has denied this. Amnesty International is seriously concerned that the increased tension may lead to an escalation of violence and human rights violations.

After a number of postponements, the first round of Haiti's presidential elections took place on 7 February. René Garcia Préval, who is supported by many of the poorer people in Haiti, initially appeared to have won the election. However, with 90% of the votes counted it appears that he may have failed to secure the 50% of votes he needs in order to be declared outright winner, meaning that a second run-off vote may now take place on 19 March.

On 13 February following the news of a possible second round of voting, many of René Garcia Préval's supporters took to the streets of Port-au-Prince, burning tyres and building barricades, claiming that the results had been manipulated and that René Garcia Préval had been the victim of electoral fraud. According to reports, shots were fired during the demonstrations and at least one man was killed. Witnesses claim to have seen UN peacekeepers fire into the crowds. However, a UN spokesperson has stated that peacekeepers fired warning shots into the air but that they did not kill anyone. There have been a number of reports alleging fraud during the electoral process and two members of the Haitian Provisional Electoral Council (*Conseil Électoral Provisoire*) have reportedly claimed that electoral results had been manipulated.

The UN has previously been implicated in civilian deaths during policing operations in July 2005 and January this year. Amnesty International believes that this latest incident must be fully and independently investigated by MINUSTAH and the Haitian government and calls on all those involved in the current electoral process to respect human rights and the rule of law.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of demonstrators protesting about the recent election results, and reminding the MINUSTAH to fully comply with its mandate of "protect[ing] civilians under imminent threat of physical violence";
- calling for the deaths and injuries that have occurred during the present political violence to be fully and impartially investigated;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that all public security policing operations are carried out in line with United Nations standards on the minimum use of force and firearms;
- insisting all allegations of human rights violations committed by the police and security forces are investigated promptly, impartially and exhaustively, for the results to be made public and for those found responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on all those involved in the electoral process to respect human rights and the rule of law.

APPEALS TO:

UN Special Representative

Mr Juan Gabriel Valdés

Special Representative of the Secretary-General

United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)

385, Ave. John Brown, Bourdon, B.P. 557, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (W.I.)

Fax: + 509 244 3512

Salutation: Dear Special Representative Valdés

UN Military Commander in Haiti

Lt. General José Elito Siqueira Carvalho

United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)

385, Ave. John Brown, Bourdon, B.P. 557, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (W.I.)

Fax: + 509 244 3512

Salutation: Dear Lt. General Siqueira

Commissioner of UNPOL - the UN Civilian Police in Haiti

Mr R. Graham Muir

Police Commissioner

United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)

385, Ave. John Brown, Bourdon, B.P. 557, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (W.I.)

Fax: + 509 244 9366

Email: muir@un.org

Salutation: Dear Commissioner Muir

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister

Monsieur Gérard Latortue

Ministère de l'Intérieure, Villa d'Accueil, Delmas 60

Musseau, Port-au-Prince, HAITI (W.I.)

Fax: + 509 249 5561

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre/ Dear Prime Minister

General Director of the Haiti National Police

Mario Andresol

Directeur Général de la Police Nationale d'Haïti

Grand Quartier Générale la Police

12 rue Oscar Pacot, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (W.I.)

Fax: +509 245 7374

Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur Général/Dear Mr. Andresol

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 27 March 2006.