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Fear of Extrajudicial Execution

6 December 1990

**Haiti: Bomb Attack on Presidential Candidate,
Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned at reports of a bomb attack on a political rally attended by presidential candidate Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide on 5 December 1990 in Petionville, seven miles from the capital Port-au-Prince, leaving at least five people dead and over 50 wounded. Presidential elections are due to take place in Haiti on 16 December.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, the explosion occurred as the rally of several thousand supporters of Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ending and supporters were dispersing.

Father Aristide, a Roman Catholic priest, and a candidate for the Convergence Democratique (Democratic Alliance), had reportedly left the rally some thirty minutes prior to the attack. Reports indicate that the bomb exploded immediately after a short electricity blackout and, according to unconfirmed reports, shots were fired into the assembled crowd. At least five people were reported killed, and over 50 wounded, some critically. So far no one has apparently claimed responsibility for the attack.

Shortly before the explosion in Petionville took place, a group of unidentified armed men reportedly broke into the office of the Mouvement d'Organisation du Pays (MOP), Movement to Organize the Country, which also supports the candidacy of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The offices were ransacked and several people, including a MOP guard were reportedly beaten.

Father Aristide, an outspoken critic of the government, has survived at least three assassination attempts. In September 1988, dozens of men armed with guns and machetes attacked the St. Jean Bosco Church in La Saline, a shanty town of the capital Port-au-Prince. One of their main targets appeared to be Father Aristide who was saying Mass. At least 12 parishioners were killed and over 70 wounded in the attack. In April 1990 judicial proceedings were initiated against a member of the armed forces charged with being involved in the attack, but the case has yet to come to trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Presidential and legislative elections scheduled to take place on 29 November 1987 were abandoned after at least 30 people were killed and many injured at a polling station, by armed groups said to be working in close collaboration with the security forces. Subsequent elections which were boycotted by the main opposition candidates and a large proportion of the electorate, took place on 17 January 1988, in an atmosphere of fear, and were largely regarded as fraudulent. The elected

government of President Leslie Manigat was later overthrown in a coup in June 1988. The forthcoming presidential elections are the first to take place since January 1988.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- asking for guarantees for the safety of Father Aristide and all those involved in the electoral process, including government officials, candidates, voters and observers;
- asking that fully independent and impartial inquiries be opened into the attack and that the results be made public and that those found responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence

Président de la République d'Haïti

Palais National

Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Telegrams: President, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telexes: 20068 PALAIS or 20551 SECEXEC

Faxes: +509 22 3 9407 (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Son Excellence

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Cité de l'Exposition

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Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telexes: 20166 JUSTICE

Monsieur le Colonel Jean Thomas

Ministre de la Défense Nationale

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Port-au-Prince, Haïti

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Telexes: 20515 DPTINDN

Monsieur le Lieutenant-General Hérard Abraham

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Rue Geffrard

Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Telegrams: Commandant Forces Armees, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telexes: 20391 GQFADH

COPIES TO:

Monsieur le Docteur Louis Roy

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Port-au-Prince, Haïti

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Miami
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Radio Haïti Inter
Boîte Postale 737
Port-au-Prince, Haïti

and to diplomatic representatives of Haïti in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 January 1990.