

UA 218/02

Intimidat.

HAITI Sylvie Bajoux (f)] human rights
Jean-Claude Bajoux (m)] defenders
Israel Jacky Cantaves (m), journalist

On 16 July, human rights defender Sylvie Bajoux was attacked in her home in the Péguenville area of the capital, Port-au-Prince. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Sylvie Bajoux and her husband Jean-Claude, and fears that this attack may be aimed at trying to prevent them and other human rights defenders and journalists from carrying out their work.

The attack occurred at around midday, when three armed men broke into the house where Sylvie Bajoux lives with her husband Jean Claude. The assailants reportedly beat and tied up the three employees of the Bajoux who were in the house at the time. One of them then reportedly approached Sylvie Bajoux with his gun in his hand, knocked her onto the ground and struck her on the back. The attackers also stole some small items from the house and then left, leaving the staff and Sylvie Bajoux tied up in the house.

Both Sylvie and Jean Claude Bajoux are long-term human rights defenders. This is not the first time that they have been attacked and intimidated- they were also victims of repression during the Duvalier period and under the military coup. They currently run the well-respected organization *Centre Oecuménique des droits humains* (CEDH), Ecumenical Centre for Human Rights.

This attack comes after the kidnapping on 15 July of Israel Jacky Cantave, an investigative reporter for the Port-au-Prince-based station Radio Caraïbes. He at times used his radio program to highlight human rights issues that CEDH, among other organizations were working on.

He and his cousin were apparently attacked as they were driving home from work. The pair were found on Tuesday night, beaten and bound with duct tape, in an abandoned lot in the Haitian capital. They had reportedly been seized by a group of armed men who forced their vehicle to stop before abducting them. According to local sources, Israel Jacky Cantave had received several death threats in the days preceding the attack. These were reportedly believed to be linked to his investigative work in the Cite Soleil and La Saline slum areas of the capital, areas of heavy drug trafficking and gang activity.

The Secretary of State for Communications, Mario Dupuy, stated shortly after Cantave's abduction that "the government will not tolerate this type of aggression against journalists and will declare 'zero tolerance' against it" ("Le gouvernement ne va pas tolérer ce type d'agression contre les journalistes et ce sera la tolérance zéro à ce propos"). However, concerns remain about the safety of all human rights defenders and journalists in the wake of these attacks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders and journalists are increasingly at risk in Haiti. Since the killing of prominent radio journalist and long-time democracy and human rights activist Jean Dominique in April 2000, freedom of expression has been severely undermined and a number of journalists and human rights defenders have been attacked or killed. On 22 February 2002, Patrick Merisier, a radio broadcaster and human rights worker from the organisation *Coalition Nationale des Droits des Haïtiens*, National Coalition for Haitian Rights, (NCHR) was shot in the chest and arm by two men as he waited to be served in a restaurant in Port-au-Prince. Prior to this, in January 2002 he had received anonymous threats that he would be killed if he did not stop his human rights monitoring and broadcasts. (see UA 76/02, AMR 36/003/2002 13 March 2002).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Sylvie and Jean Claude Bajeux, their employees and their colleagues at the *Centre Oecumenique de Droits Humains (CEDH)* and reminding the authorities that they have a particular duty to protect human rights defenders;
- expressing concern for the safety of Jacky Cantave and reminding the authorities of its duties to protect press freedom and the safety of journalists;
- welcoming the statement made by Mario Dupuy, Secretary of State for Communications condemning attacks against journalists but urging him to make a similar condemnation of attacks on human rights defenders;
- urging that these attacks be immediately and fully investigated and those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

S.E. Monsieur Jean Bertrand Aristide
Président de la République d'Haïti
Présidence de la République d'Haïti
Palais National
Champ de Mars
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telegram: Président de la République d'Haïti, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Fax: + 509 223 0241

e-mail: embassy@haiti.org (Haitian embassy in Washington, DC)

Salutation: Your Excellency/Monsieur le Président de la République

Mario Dupuy

e et la

tion, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

e Secrétaire d'Etat

rité Publique, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

credited to your country.

the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 August 2002.