

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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**UA 72/93      Fear of torture/Legal concern**

**15 March 1993**

**HAITI:          Viergéla PAUL (female)**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the physical safety of Viergéla Paul, who was reportedly arrested by the local *chef de section* (rural police chief) on 7 March 1993 in the locality of Thomonde, in Haiti's Centre department.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, Viergéla Paul was accused of trying to organize the population against the government. She is the aunt of Jolet Paul, a human rights activist who was himself arrested by the local military in Mirebalais, Centre department, on 30 June 1992, on the grounds that he contacted Amnesty International in order to obtain the release of several prisoners. Jolet Paul's sister-in-law was reportedly killed as a result of an attack on members of the Mouvman Peyizan Papay (MPP), Papaye Peasant Movement, in Marécage, Mirebalais, shortly before his arrest. His brother, Léogène Paul, a member of the MPP, a peasant organization which has been severely targeted since the September 1991 coup, was arrested and detained for a short period in 1991. Since the coup, Amnesty International has received numerous reports of people being singled out for abuse on account of their relatives' activities.

Amnesty International has received unconfirmed reports that Viergéla Paul's family was asked to pay the local rural chief some 1,500 gourdes (about US\$160) to ensure that she would not be beaten. Amnesty International has been concerned at the numerous reports that many victims of human rights violations have been extorted money by the Haitian authorities in order not to arrest or torture them, in order to secure better prison conditions, or simply to ensure protection. The organization is therefore extremely concerned for the physical security of Viergéla Paul.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Troops violently overthrew the democratically elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who took office in Haiti on 7 February 1991, in a coup on the night of 29 to 30 September 1991. Since then Amnesty International has learned of widespread human rights violations committed by the security forces, including large numbers of extrajudicial executions, torture and ill-treatment and mass arrests without warrant. Several of those detained by the authorities remain "disappeared". These abuses have been carried out by uniformed security force agents or, on some occasions, by men in civilian clothes ostensibly linked to them.

Members of the MPP have, since the coup, been heavily targeted by the authorities. In early October 1991 the MPP headquarters in Papaye were attacked

and ransacked by soldiers, and its leader, Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, as well as other prominent MPP members have since been in hiding. Several other of its members have been subjected to serious human rights violations. Abuses against the MPP and other members of grassroots organizations since the coup have been extensively documented by Amnesty International (See Haiti: The Human Rights Tragedy - Human rights violations since the coup, AI Index AMR 36/03/92, January 1992 and Haiti: Human rights held to ransom, AI Index AMR 36/41/92, August 1992).

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in French, English or in your own language:**

- asking for clarification of the reasons for the arrest of Vierg la Paul and information about her current legal situation;
- asking that she be promptly brought before a judge according to Haitian law and that she be charged with a recognizable criminal offence or be released;
- asking that she be given access to legal counsel and family visits;
- expressing concern at the reported threats to beat her, and asking that all necessary steps be taken to guarantee her physical integrity.

**APPEALS TO**

1) Prime Minister:

Marc BAZIN

Premier Ministre

Palais National

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

**Telegrams: Premier Ministre BAZIN, Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

**Faxes: + 509 34 1980, + 509 23 2121**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre /  
Dear Prime Minister**

2) Military Commander of the Centre Department:

Monsieur le Capitaine Josel CHARLES

Commandant de l'Unit  Tactique

D partement Militaire du Centre

Hinche

D partement du Centre, Haiti

**Telegrams: Commandant, D partement Centre, Hinche, Haiti**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Capitaine /  
Dear Captain**

3) Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces:

Monsieur le G n ral Raoul CEDRAS

Commandant-en-Chef des

Forces Arm es d'Ha ti

Grand Quartier G n ral des Forces Arm es d'Ha ti

Rue Geffrard

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

**Telegrams: Comandant-en-Chef des Armees d'Haiti Cedras, Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

**Telephone: + 509 22 3935**

**Telexes: 20391 gqfadh**

**Faxes: + 509 23 9007, + 509 23 9407**

**Salutation: Monsieur le G n ral /  
Dear General**

4) Minister of the Interior and Defence:

M. le Général Carl Michel NICOLAS

Ministre de l'Intérieur et

de la Défense Nationale

Palais des Ministères

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

**Telegrams: Ministre de l'Interieur NICOLAS, Port-au-Prince, Haiti**

**Telephone: + 509 22 9198, + 509 22 1090**

**Telexes: 20515 Dptindn**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre /**

**Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO**

Chief of National Police:

Monsieur le Lt.Colonel

Michel FRANÇOIS

Chef de la Police Nationale

Grand Quartier Général de la Police

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

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 26 April 1993.