

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 47/94 Fear for safety

11 August 1994

HAITI André Thélusma (approximately 60 years old) and another man,
aged approximately 40

Amnesty International has grave concerns for the safety of André Thélusma and another Haitian following their arrest in Port-au-Prince on 31 July 1994. They were detained while accompanying three journalists from the United States (US) through a gate at the Port-au-Prince airport into a so-called "strategic zone." The US journalists had been covering events in Haiti for a major US television news program. The two Haitians are reportedly now held at Fort Dimanche, an army barracks which also has a detention centre, notorious during the Duvaliers Regime for the systematic torture of detainees.

The two Haitians were assisting the three journalists as guide/chauffeur and interpreter respectively. In June Haiti's *de facto* authorities designated various areas, including the airport, as "strategic" zones, at the same time that foreign journalists were warned that they were not to leave the capital, Port-au-Prince, without a special permit. The authorities later announced that any foreign news personnel found within the newly created strategic zones were to be deported. The three US journalists arrested along with André Thélusma and his companion were in fact deported, as the Haitian authorities had warned, but André Thélusma and the other Haitian who had been assisting remained in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Haiti has been suffering a long-term human rights crisis, during which AI has received regular reports of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances," torture and arbitrary arrest, directed principally at supporters of President-in-exile Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but also affecting the population at large.

A mass exodus of Haitian refugees to the United States (US) in July, apparently sparked by a short-lived change in US policy regarding Haitian-asylum seekers; the expulsion the same month of the United Nations (UN)/Organization of American States (OAS) international civilian observer mission to Haiti; and the one year anniversary of the Governor's Island agreement, whose terms have been completely flouted by Haiti's *de facto* military government raised the political temperature concerning Haiti in the United States. This led the US to reactivate earlier efforts to gain support at the UN and elsewhere for an armed intervention in Haiti. On 31 July, the UN Security Council meeting in special session passed Resolution 940 (1994) authorizing the formation of a multilateral force under unified command, opening the way to a US invasion of Haiti. In response, Haiti's *de facto* government declared a state of siege, suspending constitutional guarantees. It also issued a decree warning against the "diffusion of all alarmist or tendentious news," and against Haitians allowing themselves to become "instruments of foreign propaganda." In June, the authorities had already announced the new measures intended to curtail the movements of foreign journalists which led in August to the expulsion of the three US journalists, and the detention of André Thélusma and his companion.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams (*):

- urging that steps be taken immediately to ensure that the physical integrity of André Thélusma and the other Haitian arrested with him be protected while they are in detention and that they be allowed access to their families and legal counsel ;

- asking that they be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or released.

*** At present, telegrams are the only medium for appeals into Haiti. Please organize as many as you are able to.**

APPEALS TO

Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces

Monsieur le Général Raoul CÉDRAS

Commandant-en-Chef de Forces armées d'Haiti

Grand Quartier général des Forces armées d'Haiti

Rue Geffrard

Port-au-Prince, HAITI

Telegrams: Commandant-en-Chef des Forces armées d'Haiti

Général Cédras, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

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

Telegrams: Chef, Police Nationale, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Army Chief of Staff

Monsieur le Brigadier Général

Phillipe BIAMBY

Chef d'Etat-Major Général

Grand Quartier Général de Forces Armées d'Haiti

Rue Geffrard

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telegrams: Chef d'Etat-Major Général, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Ranking officer at Fort Dimanche

Monsieur le Capitaine

Fort Dimanche

Boulevard La Saline

Port-au-Prince

Telegrams: Monsieur le Capitaine, Fort Dimanche, Boulevard

La Saline, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Newspaper (weekly):

Haiti en Marche

173 N. W. 94 St.

Miami, Florida

33149 USA

and to diplomatic representatives of Haiti accredited to your country.

Please also consider copying your appeals to any Haitian exile radio stations or newspapers that may exist in your country so that they can publicise AI's concerns in this case.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 September 1994.