

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Haiti: Unbridled violence must end

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at and condemns the recent outbreak of violence between police forces and armed civilians that has been rocking the Haitian capital since 30 September.

Amnesty International condemns in the strongest terms the beheading of National Police officers, supposedly by Lavalas supporters.

Over the past week, dozens of civilians and ten policemen have been killed by gunfire in clashes between alleged Lavalas Party supporters and security forces. Acts of looting and vandalism have also been reported in different areas of the capital. Most of the victims lived in deprived areas of the capital such as Bel-Air, Cité Soleil and Martissant, all considered pro-Lavalas strongholds. Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the disregard for the lives and safety of the people in impoverished neighbourhoods of Port au Prince shown in these incidents.

Amnesty International recognizes the grave security threat posed by the armed groups but urges the government to adopt a strategy to ensure the protection of fundamental rights to life, safety, due legal process and political participation. The organization reiterates its demand to the transitional government to implement a comprehensive disarmament program.

In order to ensure that all sectors of Haitian society receive adequate protection from abuse and threats to life, Amnesty International makes the following recommendations to the Haitian transitional government:

Send a clear public message to the national police force and armed civilians that unlawful killings are not acceptable and that those responsible will be prosecuted.

Ensure that all suspicious deaths are promptly, effectively, independently, and impartially investigated, regardless of the social status of the victim.

Ensure that witnesses and their families receive protection if they provide information.

Ensure that the police only use force when strictly necessary and only to the minimum extent required under the circumstances. Lethal force should not be used except when strictly unavoidable and only in order to protect life.

Initiate a comprehensive training programme for all police officers on international human rights standards, including the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 17 December 1979).

Form an independent committee to establish a dialogue with Lavalas supporters and mediate a peaceful solution to the political crisis.

Amnesty International calls upon the Lavalas party to:

Strongly and publicly condemn acts of violence perpetrated by its supporters.
Take all possible steps to end violence by its supporters.
Seek solutions to the crisis that are grounded in full respect for human rights and the rule of law, including entering into a dialogue with the authorities and other political actors.
Cooperate with the transitional government and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in the implementation of a disarmament programme.

Amnesty International calls upon members of the international community to:

Assist the government of Haiti to provide full training on human rights standards for all its security forces.
Assist the government of Haiti to establish a dialogue with representatives from local Lavalas organizations and establish an action plan towards the suppression of political violence.
Take steps for a full and prompt deployment of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in accordance with the UN Security Council's resolution 1542 of 30 April 2004, in order to fulfil its mandate to establish the rule of law, public safety and public order in Haiti.
Assist the transitional government to urgently implement a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme of all armed groups.