

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE01/007/2010  
15 January 2010

## **Protection of human rights must accompany relief efforts in Haiti**

Amnesty International called on the United Nations to put in place measures for the protection of human rights and the most vulnerable among the survivors of Tuesday's devastating earthquake.

Amnesty International saluted the speedy and courageous efforts of UN, relief and development workers in Haiti and around the world assisting with humanitarian efforts to save lives, clear the devastation and restore basic services and the country's crumbling infrastructure.

The organization also asked for particular attention to be provided to ensuring respect for human rights and protection of children and those left orphans as a consequence of the earthquake. Girls in particular are at higher risk of sexual abuse and attack.

“The current situation of lawlessness in Haiti and the increased vulnerability of women and children creates the perfect environment for human rights abuses and crimes such as rape and sexual abuse to take place undetected and go unpunished,” said Gerardo Ducos, Haiti researcher at Amnesty International. “Protecting vulnerable groups from sexual violence is as important as providing them with relief.”

Amnesty International made the call as thousands of Haitians are feared dead after a 7.1 earthquake struck the country on Tuesday. Thousands of people are still unaccounted for and survivors await relief efforts from international donors to provide them with access to drinkable water, food and medical care. In the wake of the disaster, the law enforcement capacity of the Haitian National Police and the justice system are severely compromised as most of its infrastructure has collapsed and many officials remain unaccounted for.

Amnesty International has previously documented shocking levels of sexual violence against women and girls across the country.

“Before the devastating earthquake, Haiti was unable to effectively protect human rights and in particular, women and girls from sexual violence. Unless action is taken now while relief efforts are ongoing, the situation is only likely to deteriorate,” said Gerardo Ducos.

Amnesty International conveys its deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the victims and a message of solidarity to the Haitian people.

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