

## **Haiti: Ten years after the coup, some human rights improvements lost**

*Despite initial improvements after the return to constitutional order in 1994, the human rights situation in Haiti is again deteriorating, Amnesty International warned today.*

*Ten years on from the violent coup of 30 September 1991 that overthrew the government of Jean Bertrand Aristide, the organization presented today a report outlining the gains and losses in the level of respect for human rights over this crucial period in Haiti's history.*

*"Undoubtedly, the gravity of the human rights situation in Haiti is nowhere near that of the years following the coup," Amnesty International said, highlighting positive developments including the disbanding of the army -- notorious for human rights violations --, the creation of a civilian police force and an initial increase in freedom of expression and association.*

*"However, the heavy legacy of the years of *de facto* military rule has not been fully dealt with," the organization added noting that many of the victims of the coup are still awaiting justice and that the justice system remains largely dysfunctional.*

*Moreover, since the electoral period in 2000, some of the progress achieved has been undone," Amnesty International continued, citing political pressures on the judiciary and the police and crackdowns on the exercise of fundamental freedoms. In one example, the investigation into the April 2000 killing of journalist Jean Dominique has been hampered by threats against judges and the refusal of public figures, often backed*

by crowds of angry supporters, to respond to judicial summons ordering them to give evidence.

Amnesty International is also concerned about partisan attacks on freedom of expression at the hands of supporters of Jean Bertrand Aristide's now ruling party, *Fanmi Lavalas*.

"*Fanmi Lavalas* supporters should be especially sensitive to these issues, having been themselves the victims of extreme brutality after the coup," Amnesty International said, calling on the president, government officials and party leaders to take urgent steps to counter this spate of violence and harassment of journalists, activists and opposition members.

"If not reversed, this deterioration could lead to even more serious violations of human rights," the organization added. Amnesty International also noted that attacks on police stations in July of this year, allegedly by former military officers, have further increased tensions.

### **Background**

For more information, to arrange an interview or to receive a copy of the report "Haiti: Steps Forward, Steps Back: human rights ten years after the coup", please contact the Amnesty International press office on +44 20 7413 5566/5562. The report will also be available on the web at the embargo time. Please visit:

<http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/amr360102001>

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