

URGENT NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 20 JANUARY 1992

YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN SENT THIS NEWS RELEASE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN HAITI - UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE THREE CORRECTIONS TO BE MADE, IN PARAGRAPHS 8 AND 9. THE ENCLOSED VERSION IS CORRECT - PLEASE REPLACE THE NEWS RELEASE YOU WERE SENT LAST WEEK WITH THIS ONE. BECAUSE THIS NEWS RELEASE AND DOCUMENT HAVE BEEN DONE QUICKLY IN RESPONSE TO THE SITUATION, THERE HAS NOT BEEN TIME TO GET THE REPORT TO YOU. SOME OF YOU WILL ALREADY HAVE RECEIVED THE INTRODUCTION/SUMMARY - IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE INTRODUCTION AND NEED IT, PLEASE CONTACT THE HAITI TEAM IN THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT AT THE IS.

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£HAITI: @CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON
CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Amnesty International today called for intensified international action on the rampant arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial executions still continuing in Haiti four months after the overthrow of the president.

In releasing a 38-page report on four months of widespread abuses, the human rights organization urged the United Nations to step up scrutiny of the country, particularly at the upcoming Commission on Human Rights.

Amnesty International also renewed its call on the US government to ensure the almost 7,000 Haitians who have sought safety in the US get a fair asylum hearing.

About 500 Haitians have already been forced back to the island without such a hearing, but several court rulings in the past two months have stopped the wholesale return of people wanting to seek asylum. Another court decision which could affect the return of people now held at a US naval base in Cuba is expected today.

"We're particularly concerned about the fate of anyone sent back to Haiti because of abuses inflicted on those returned in the past and current reports that soldiers have severely beaten and arrested people simply because they were trying to flee the island," the organization said.

Amnesty International said that it was appalled the US government refused in December to allow it to visit the naval base in Cuba to interview the Haitian asylum seekers, a decision the organization is asking the government to reconsider.

In its report, based on information from lawyers, journalists, church and human rights groups, Amnesty International said it has received the names and details of some 300 people who have been arbitrarily arrested since September. One of the most recent cases is that of Jean-Claude Museau, who was arrested on 30 December and severely beaten especially on the head; he died on 8 January apparently as a result of the harsh beating.

The organization said that because of the turmoil in the country it was impossible to determine the exact number of people extrajudicially

executed, although the figure would clearly amount to at least a hundred. Some of those have died when they were gunned down at rallies or elsewhere in public, especially in poor areas where ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide has widespread support.

The return of the rural police chiefs and of former members of the civilian militia Tonton Macoutes, notorious for committing human rights violations under the Duvalier governments, has been followed by disturbing reports of abuses from the countryside. In one town called Gonaives seven people were killed and seven others wounded when soldiers opened fire on a pro-Aristide demonstration.

Those who have been particularly targeted in both urban and rural areas are people, such as clergy, journalists, trade unionists, students and human rights activists, who have openly denounced the overthrow of the government and the subsequent wave of human rights violations.

Many of those have had their homes or offices raided, have been picked up off the streets and some killed in public. Government-run or allied radio stations have even broadcast the names of hundreds of people targeted for reprisal attacks.

But many others not involved politically have also been arbitrarily arrested, tortured or killed by government agents. In one reported case, a woman with a seven-month-old baby was shot dead when a soldier opened fire on a non-political celebration, apparently because he assumed it was an Aristide rally.

People have been arrested, tortured or killed simply for selling opposition newspapers, listening to foreign radio broadcasts, and in one case just glancing at a photo of the former president.

Even children have been affected by the violence, with at least 25 arbitrarily arrested since September. One 13-year-old boy was arrested in November along with 20 adults after a memorial mass. He was severely beaten, and was the only one of the group spared execution.

EMBARGOED FOR 0700 HRS GMT WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 1992