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US and UN must guarantee Haiti emergency assistance

US authorities and UN agencies in Haiti must urgently resolve the lack of access to emergency aid for those in desperate need following last week's earthquake, Amnesty International warned today.

According to reports from official sources and relief organizations in Haiti, food, water, sanitation and vital medical supplies have arrived in the country but are still not reaching those in most need in many parts of the capital Port-au-Prince and in outlying areas equally severely affected.

There are reports from some areas, for example the town of Gressier, that distribution of essential supplies has still not started.

Amnesty International has also urged the US authorities and UN agencies to ensure protection of the most vulnerable in Haiti, especially unaccompanied children, which must be a top priority along with the distribution of food and water.

"Haitian children are at risk of being seized by people-trafficking networks, of being abused and used as child slaves, as well as suffering pervasive sexual violence. Special measures need to be taken quickly to protect those at risk," said Kerrie Howard, Americas Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

Special measures need also to be urgently established to receive thousands of displaced peoples fleeing the crisis to other parts of Haiti in need of water, sanitation, food and shelter.

More than 100,000 Haitians are feared dead after a 7.1 earthquake struck on Tuesday 12 January. 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.

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