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PUBLIC STATEMENT

HAITI

US must return documents intact to Haiti

Amnesty International supports the request by Adama Dieng, United Nations (UN) Independent Expert on Haiti, that the UN General Assembly urge the United States to return intact approximately 160,000 pages of documents and other materials confiscated from Haitian paramilitary and military headquarters in 1994.

Amnesty International believes the documents in question are likely to contain information crucial to investigating past human rights violations in Haiti and bringing those responsible to justice.

The documents were seized in 1994, when a Multinational Force (MNF) restored democratically-elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide to power following a three-year period under a de facto military government. US troops belonging to the MNF confiscated numerous documents and other materials from military and paramilitary offices and transferred them to the US.

The Haitian Government requested the US authorities to return the materials in their entirety. However, US authorities reviewed the documents and reportedly blanked out sections of them, where reference is believed to have been made to US citizens and possibly other matters relating to US government activities in Haiti. In October 1996 the materials were transferred to the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince but the Haitian Government has refused to accept them unless they are intact.

Amnesty International, concerned that every effort be made to end impunity for human rights violations in Haiti, joins other human rights organizations in urging the General Assembly to call on the US to return the documents to Haiti in their entirety. Only in this way can past violations be fully investigated and those responsible brought to trial.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>