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@Human rights gagged: attacks on freedom of expression

OCTOBER 1993

AI INDEX: AMR 36/25/93

Since September 1991 when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed in a military coup, Amnesty International has received information of numerous incidents of human rights violations in Haiti, including "disappearances", extrajudicial executions, torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary arrests. In recent weeks there has been a marked upsurge in these violations, particularly in the capital, Port-au-Prince. The abuses have reportedly been carried out by military and police as well as by *attachés*, armed civilian auxiliaries to the security forces.

Sources in Haiti suggest that the rise in violations, many of them directed at supporters of President Aristide, reflect the security forces' unease at the agreement signed on 3 July 1993 by President Aristide and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Raoul Cédras, for the return to office of President Aristide on 30 October 1993. According to reports, at least 100 people have been killed since the agreement was signed. This recent wave of violence accelerated on 8 September, as the date of President Aristide's agreed return drew nearer, in an apparent effort by his opponents to block or destabilise that return. A particularly alarming incident occurred after a ceremony to reinstate Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul, when at least five people were killed and at least 30 wounded.

Many of the victims of repression have been journalists attempting to report incidents of human rights violations or others who have attempted to exercise their right to freedom of expression, by putting up posters, selling papers or handing out leaflets in support of

President Aristide. The victims have been threatened, assaulted, arrested, beaten, and in some cases killed. Latest reports of abuses against journalists and those exercising their right to freedom of expression include:

John Smith Dominique Prien, an employee of **Radio Plus**, a private radio station in Port-au-Prince, was the victim of an attack on the night of 10 August. According to reports, over a dozen soldiers from Carrefour in the outskirts of Port-au-Prince came to his home and fired shots into the courtyard, beat on the doors with their guns and threw stones on to the roof. John Smith Dominique, who had previously received threats from the military, managed to escape over a back wall. Radio Plus had recently referred to the increase in repression in Port-au-Prince.

Germéus Deshommes, an active member of a peasant movement in Ravine Desroches in the Nord (North) Department, was arrested on 22 August 1993 in Limbé, accused of putting up posters of President Aristide. He was reportedly severely beaten by the local *chef de section* (rural police chief) and several other members of the police, and left dead on the street.

Also in the Nord Department, on 25 August 1993 thirteen people were arrested while they were putting up pro-Aristide posters in Pont L'Estère. They were reportedly taken to the local police station and beaten before being released.

On 31 August 1993 **Jocelyne Nicolás** was arrested by the police at her home in Saint Martin, Port-au-Prince. She was accused of having distributed posters of President Aristide, but was released some 24 hours later. She reportedly bore injuries to the head, had been raped and been forced to roll in garbage.

On 7 September 1993 **Berénice Charles** was reportedly picked up in Pont Sondé, Artibonite Department, by three armed men who accused him of participating in a poster campaign in support of President Aristide. He was apparently driven away in a white Toyota jeep to a cemetery in Latour where he was ill-treated and then released a few hours later.

Also on 7 September 1993, American journalist **Patricia Benoît**, of the news agency **Global Vision**, was reportedly violently pushed by attachés who confiscated her camera while she was filming outside City Hall in Port-au-Prince (some 200 attachés had been occupying the building for several days and are alleged to have threatened to kill Mayor Evans Paul if he tried to retake office). According to witnesses, the aggressors told her that if she had been Haitian they would have killed her.

The following day, 8 September, after a ceremony had just taken place in the City Hall to reinstate Mayor Evans Paul, **Bayard Edrice**, who was an associate of Evans Paul, and at least four others were killed and at least 30 were wounded, apparently by *attachés*. On the

previous day a group calling itself *Béton Chaud*, Hot Concrete, had publicly announced via Radio Métropole that Prime Minister Robert Malval and Mayor Evans Paul would both be killed if they came to City Hall for the ceremony. Despite this public announcement, the police apparently took no action to try to prevent the violence. Many journalists who were standing outside City Hall at the time and witnessed the violence were reportedly assaulted by *attachés*. The Director of the newspaper **Le Rouleau**, **Mr. Winshell**, was violently dragged from his car and severely beaten. **Emmanuel Laurent**, a journalist of the private radio station **Tropic FM**, was reportedly severely beaten on the back and the arm when he tried to intervene between some foreign journalists and some *attachés* who were insulting them. He subsequently had to be taken to the Red Cross hospital for treatment.

Employees of **Tropic FM** report that they receive threatening phone calls on a daily basis. On one occasion the entire staff were threatened by a new political group calling itself *Front Révolutionnaire pour l'Avancement et le Progrès* (FRAP), Revolutionary Front for Advancement and Progress.

On 11 September 1993 **Antoine Izméry**, a prominent supporter of President Aristide, was dragged out of the Sacré-Coeur de Turgeau Church in Port-au-Prince and shot dead in the street by gunmen, described by some sources as plainclothes policemen opposed to the reinstatement of President Aristide and who were ostensibly present at the church "to ensure security at the mass". According to witnesses, uniformed policemen passed by the church minutes before and after the attack, but did nothing to intervene. Armed men also reportedly beat Aristide supporters outside the church. At the time of his killing Antoine Izméry was attending a mass to commemorate the fifth anniversary of an attack on Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide on 11 September 1988 while he was saying mass at the St John Bosco Church in La Saline, a shanty town on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. At least five people were killed and some 70 injured in this attack. Antoine Izméry was co-chair of the *Komite Mete Men Pou Verite Blayi* (**KOMEVEB**), **Committee to Show the Truth**, which launched a program of posting photographs of Aristide around the country and reportedly intended to test the will of the army to allow President Aristide to return to power. Three members of the organization, including **Father Yvon Massac**, had been detained on 17 August 1993 for three days when they tried to put up Aristide posters in Pétionville. On the morning that Antoine Izméry was killed, an individual entered the church where the commemorative mass was to be held, and threatened priests Antoine Adrien and William Smarth that bloodshed was going to occur there that day and that they were responsible for having provoked it.

Several journalists, including photographer **Daniel Morel** of **Associated Press**, who were at the Sacré-Coeur de Turgeau Church when the killing of Antoine Izméry took place, were apparently roughed up by *attachés*. **Wilson Suren** of the **Haitian News Service** was detained for about three hours and then released. A local photographer for the weekly newspaper *Haiti en Marche*, **Hans Bazard**, was reportedly assaulted by a group of *attachés* who confiscated his camera, case and press card and then chased him from the area,

threatening that he would be hearing from them again. On the following Monday, 13 September, an armed *attaché* apparently made his presence known at the offices of *Haiti en Marche*.

Shortly after the killing of Antoine Izméry, employees of **Radio Caraïbes** received an anonymous telephone threat which said "*Après Izméry, ce sera votre tour...*" ("After Izméry, it will be your turn..."). The day before, 10 September 1993, some 20 *attachés* armed with guns and grenades had reportedly entered the premises of Radio Carabïes and threatened everyone present, accusing them of making a mistake by announcing the names of the *attachés* present at City Hall on 8 September. The Director of Radio Caraïbes, **Patrick Moussigac**, was forced to flee the country.

On 14 September 1993 **Mathieu Brunel** was arrested in Gonaviès, Artibonite Department, and taken to the local barracks. He was accused of distributing posters and leaflets in favour of President Aristide. His current circumstances are not yet known.

On 17 September 1993 the body of **Renald Jean-François** was found in Cité Soleil, a shanty town of Port-au-Prince. He had apparently participated in a poster campaign in support of President Aristide on 13 September and was beaten with batons and guns by a group of *attachés* before being shot dead on the street.

KEYWORDS: DISAPPEARANCES / EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION / ARBITRARY ARREST / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / SEXUAL ASSAULT / HARASSMENT / CENSORSHIP / JOURNALISTS / BROADCASTERS / PHOTOGRAPHERS / POLITICAL ACTIVISTS / PEASANTS / EDITORS / POLITICIANS / LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES / RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS - CATHOLIC / FOREIGN NATIONALS / WOMEN / MILITARY / POLICE / ARMED CIVILIANS / COUPS / ANNIVERSARIES /

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