

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please bring this Urgent Action to the attention of medical groups in your section

UA 424/91 Legal concern/Fear of ill-treatment

4 December 1991

HAITI Margareth DUFOUR (née DEGAND) (f)

Amnesty International is concerned for the physical safety of Margareth Dufour (née Degand), a medical surgeon, who was arrested in Port-au-Prince on 30 November 1991 by members of the Armed Forces. She is a neighbour and friend of Jean-Robert Sabalat, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the deposed government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

According to the information received by Amnesty International, on Saturday 30 November 1991, soldiers of the Armed Forces of Haiti went to the home of Margareth Dufour and her husband Christian, a French citizen who is confined to bed following a serious accident.

The soldiers were reportedly looking for Jean-Robert Sabalat, who apparently was a frequent visitor of the house. Jean-Robert Sabalat, whose house was searched without a warrant by soldiers in mid-October, has been in hiding since the 30 September coup d'état. The soldiers were accompanied by a Juge de Paix, justice of the peace, and they reportedly declared that they found grenades and ammunition belonging to Jean-Robert Sabalat in Margareth Degand's house. However, some reports have indicated that the soldiers brought the weapons into the house in order to incriminate Jean-Robert Sabalat. Since they could not find Jean-Robert Sabalat, the soldiers arrested Margareth Dufour, and reportedly accused her of harbouring him.

Following Margareth Dufour's arrest, Jean-Robert Sabalat issued a statement denying possessing weapons. Margareth Dufour is reportedly detained in the caserne de Pétionville, Pétionville military barrack. Amnesty International is concerned for her physical safety.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On Monday 30 September, troops overthrew the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had taken office on 7 February 1991. Since then Amnesty International has learned of widespread human rights violations committed by the security forces, including a large number of extrajudicial executions, beatings and mass arrests without warrant. Many of the victims included supporters of President Aristide and members and leaders of grassroots organizations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/telephone calls/faxes/airmail letters:

- seeking guarantees that her physical integrity will be respected while in military custody;
- requesting clarification of her legal situation.

APPEALS TO

1) President:
Son Excellence

Monsieur le Président

Maître Joseph C. NERETTE
Président de la République d'Haïti
Palais National
Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Dear President

Telegrams: President Nerette, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Telephone: + 509 22 4020
Telexes: 20068 palais or 20551 specexec
Faxes: + 509 23 2121

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2) Prime Minister:

Maître Jean-Jacques HONORAT
Premier Ministre, Ministre
des Affaires Etrangères
Présidence de la République de Haïti
Palais National
Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Monsieur le Premier Ministre
Dear Prime Minister

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Honorat, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Faxes: + 509 22 1147

3) Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces:

Monsieur le Général Raoul CEDRAS
Commandant-en-Chef des Forces
Armées d'Haïti
Grand Quartier Général des Forces Armées d'Haïti
Rue Geffrard
Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Monsieur le Général
Dear General

Telegrams: Comandant-en-Chef des Forces Armees Cedras, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Telephone: + 509 22 3935
Telexes: 20391 GQFADH
Faxes: + 509 23 9007; + 509 23 9407

4) Head of the Police:

Monsieur le Majeur Michel FRANÇOIS
Chef de la Police Nationale
Grand Quartier Général de la Police
Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Monsieur le Majeur
Dear Major

Telegrams: Chef de la Police Nationale, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

5) Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Antoine LECONTE
Ministère de la Justice
Cité de l'Exposition
Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Monsieur le Ministre
Dear Minister

Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice Leconte, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Telephone: + 509 45 0474 or 45-1626
Telexes: 20166 Justice

COPIES TO:

Chamber of Deputies: Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Monsieur le Président
Chambre des Députés
Assemblée Nationale

President of the Senate:
Maître Eudrice RAYMOND
Président du Sénat
Assemblée Nationale

Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Haiti en Marche (newspaper)

173 N.W. 94 St

Miami

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and to diplomatic representatives of Haiti in your country. [Please note: Haiti's diplomatic representations still represent the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.]

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 January 1992.