

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 429/93 Fear for Safety

9 December 1993

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the ten above named Haitian asylum seekers who were reportedly arrested by the armed forces on 7 December 1993.

According to reports, they were among 28 people forcibly returned to Haiti by the United States Coast Guard, after attempting to flee the country by boat. On disembarking at Port-au-Prince they were arrested and taken to the police station, accused of organising the boat journey. The other 18 people were returned to their homes, most of which are in Cap-Haitien and Gonaïves.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since May 1992, when the US government began a policy of forcibly returning all Haitian asylum-seekers, thousands of Haitians have been intercepted by the US Coast Guard and returned to Haiti. The only option presently available to Haitians seeking asylum in the USA is the in-country processing (ICP) system. However they risk drawing attention to themselves by going to the US Embassy and may wait months for an interview date. In the past Amnesty International has received reports of arrested asylum-seekers being tortured or ill-treated whilst held in detention in Haiti.

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was due to return to power on 30 October 1993, according to the 3 July 1993 agreement signed by him and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Raoul Cédras. However, this did not happen and no other date has been set for his return. General Cédras and Police Chief Michel François are effectively ruling the country. Widespread threats and attacks against President Aristide's supporters continue to afflict the country.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in French or English or in your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the ten asylum-seekers named above;
- asking that they be immediately released or brought promptly before a competent court;
- urging that while held in detention, they be humanely treated and granted access to a lawyer, doctor and relatives.

APPEALS TO:

1) Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces:

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

Telegrams: Commandant-en-Chef des Armées d'Haiti Cedras, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Telephone: + 509 22 3935

Telexes: 20391 gqfadh

Faxes: + 509 23 9007, + 509 23 9407

Salutation: Monsieur le Général / Dear General

2) Chief of National Police:

Monsieur le Lt.Colonel Michel FRANÇOIS
 Chef de la Police Nationale
 Grand Quartier Général de la Police
 Port-au-Prince, Haiti

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

Salutation: Monsieur le Lt. Colonel / Dear Lt. Colonel

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

PACOT
 Rue Wilson 2, No 17
 Port-au-Prince
 Haiti

and to diplomatic representatives of Haiti accredited to your country.

A separate appeal will be made to United States Government.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19th January 1994.