
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 190/94

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 18 AUGUST 1994

AI INDEX: NWS 11/190/94
DISTR: SC/PO

NO OF WORDS:1875

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL/INTERNAL - ~~MATI~~ (See enclosed item and also internal note).

EDAI AND EFAI: The enclosed Haiti news release is for immediate translation, please could you e-mail the translated texts to Anita Tiessen (atiessen) and me (dstavrln) as soon as they are done. Thank you.

PLEASE NOTE: See Tadjikistan item sent out in news service 186/94 - the journalists arrested have now all been released.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Rwanda - 19 August

Haiti - 24 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 184/94

Brazil - 14 September - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL RELEASE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Kosovo - 19 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Indonesia - 28 September - LAUNCH OF CAMPAIGN

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - 12 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Thailand - 6 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 184/94

Bhutan/Nepal - 25 August - See news service 168/94

Togo - 15 September - See news service 168/94

Turkey - 14 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

INTERNAL

As part of the crisis program work on Haiti, a research project was recently set up in the Dominican Republic. The leader of the project, Ingrid Kircher, is flying to Miami on Tuesday and a press briefing is being the following day.

We are hoping to achieve international media coverage through this press briefing; agency, print, radio and TV journalists will be invited to the briefing. Please would press officers contact Christine Haenn the press officer at AIUSA about which of your media she should invite, in order to ensure as much coverage throughout the movement as possible.

HAITI PRESS BRIEFING, 1300 hrs EST 24 AUGUST 1994

Purpose of briefing

The focus will be to register AI's concern with the longstanding and current human rights situation, the past failure to address human rights issues as a central part of the problem, AI concerns, actions and recommendations with an international focus, including refugee mission, and AI's concerns/actions in the US.

Panel at briefing

Chairperson - Roger Rathman, AIUSA press officer
Tracy Ulltveit-Moe - Haiti researcher at IS
Judith Arenas - Mexican section press officer
Ingrid Kircher - AI researcher in the Dominican Republic
Carlos Salinas - AIUSA Government Program Officer

Messages at briefing

Tracy Ulltveit-Moe will make the first statement about our longstanding concerns and give some political context, including invasion issues.
Judith Arenas will talk about our actions/recommendations.
Ingrid Kircher will report back on their work in the Dominican Republic.
Carlos Salinas will talk about our US concerns/actions.

Materials

News Release, Haiti report, ENR, Dominican Republic briefing sheet. The Dominican Republic briefing sheet is being prepared by Ingrid Kircher, the leader of the research project in the Dominican Republic, and will reflect her work and findings on recent human rights violations. This briefing will be available at the press briefing and will be sent to press officers as soon as possible for use in media work.

Media Advisory about Press Briefing

These will be sent out to media by Christine Haenn, the press officer at AIUSA. Please would press officers notify her which journalists from their national media they would like to be invited to the briefing.

News Service 190/94

AI INDEX: AMR 36/WU 09/94

EMBARGOED FOR 1300 hrs EST 24 AUGUST 1994

HAITI ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA: MILITARY REPRESSION OR FOREIGN INVASION?

The people of Haiti are trapped between the dangers of possible invasion and continuing brutal repression, Amnesty International said today as it released a new report detailing human rights violations in that Caribbean nation during the last three years.

To better monitor the terror that has spread throughout the island as the de facto military rulers continue a campaign of torture, "disappearances" and killings, Amnesty International has sent researchers to the Dominican Republic to interview refugees bringing reports of human rights violations from Haiti, where a long-term nightmare has driven tens of thousands of Haitians to flee their country in recent years.

"We're concerned about the seriousness of the human rights situation, especially since it's become more difficult for the outside world to receive reports of human rights violations," said an Amnesty International researcher in the Dominican Republic.

Since the expulsion of the Organization of American States/United Nations International Civilian Mission (MICIVIH) in July, Amnesty International fears Haiti has lost the last international monitoring presence which might have helped to prevent further human rights violations.

Journalists attempting to report on abuses carried out by the authorities have also become targets of threats and harassment. Haiti's de facto authorities declared a state of siege suspending all constitutional guarantees and issued a decree that Haitian media, such as radio stations and newspaper offices, could be seized if judged to have become "instruments of foreign propaganda".

Another special decree issued on 2 August warned all journalists and particularly foreign journalists that they would be arrested if they entered the special strategic zones set up around police and military bases, airports and communications centres, as well as along the coast or near the border with the Dominican Republic. In early August, three US journalists were expelled for filming at the Port-au-Prince airport. Their Haitian driver and interpreter were detained and later released.

With the UN/OAS observer mission gone, human rights and grass-roots activists in Haiti have once again been targeted by the security forces and gangs of armed men acting with their support.

Often these activists are detained, tortured or "disappeared". Among the most recent victims are **Moïse Paul** and **Emile Georges**, who went missing 16 July and 18 July respectively. Human rights groups in Haiti believe they may have been abducted because of their activism in supporting Haiti's democratically-elected President-in-Exile Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In recent weeks, the bodies of at least 24 young men were found in shallow graves outside the capital and two severed heads were found in an open sewer in Port-au-Prince. Even former allies of the military government have been targeted: On 1 August, former senator **Reynolds Georges** was shot and wounded by police and soldiers firing automatic weapons. The attack on Georges, formerly a strong supporter of the military authorities, came days after he criticized them in the foreign press.

Since the start of this year, hundreds of people inside Haiti have been killed by soldiers or their civilian "attachés" -- and in some cases entire villages massacred -- on the slightest suspicion of supporting Aristide. Their bodies are often mutilated to sow further terror.

Escalating political violence and an economic embargo have driven tens of thousands of Haitians to risk their lives by fleeing in flimsy boats. Most apparently hope for asylum in the USA but are intercepted at sea by the US Coast Guard. Under successive changes in US government policy, they have been screened for asylum or for return to Haiti, or -- as happened for almost two years -- summarily returned to Haiti without even a cursory hearing. Recently, the US government re-introduced screening but only for a brief period. All Haitians intercepted at sea are now taken to the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where they can choose to stay or return to Haiti, but have no chance of applying for asylum in USA.

Anyone sent back may become the victim of harassment or other human rights violations and some may become victims of political killings. For example, **Oman Desanges** was a political activist who fled with his family by boat after the 1991 coup which overthrew President Aristide's government. Intercepted by the US Coast Guard and taken to Guantánamo, they were "screened in" to go to the USA to lodge an asylum claim. Yet Desanges and several relatives were returned, apparently mistakenly, to Haiti. In January 1994, Desanges' horribly mutilated body was discovered near the airport outside the capital, arms bound, a cord around his neck and with a sign reading "President of the Red Army" and "Indigent Lavallassien", a reference to his support for President Aristide.

The organization has also found that torture continues to be widespread and a standard practice in Haiti. Trade unionist **Caluste Loxus**, for instance, was arrested and severely beaten by police after distributing a press release calling for a general strike to local radio stations. The brutal treatment left him unconscious for two days, unable to eat or walk, and suffering from kidney failure.

As well, women and children have been the targets for appalling human rights violations. Members of a new political party believed to work closely with the military, the *Front révolutionnaire armé du peuple Haïtien* (Haitian People's Revolutionary Armed Front), abducted **Alerte Balance**, a market vendor, activist and wife of a well-known supporter of exiled President Aristide on 16 October 1993. They took her to a deserted area outside Port-au-Prince where victims of extra-judicial executions are dumped. Slashed repeatedly with a machete across her nose, mouth, ears and arms and left for dead, Balance survived despite losing her right forearm and the hearing in her severed right ear.

Haiti has suffered a long history of human rights violations and political violence. The current human rights crisis can be traced back to the 1991 military coup which overthrew President Aristide's government. The crisis peaked again last October when the de facto authorities flouted the Governor's Island Agreement, which had as a major aim to restore democracy and return President Aristide peaceably to power.

Although it is very concerned at the continuing human rights violations in the country, Amnesty International also fears that human rights violations may be used to justify a military invasion. The human rights organization -- which neither favours nor opposes armed intervention -- has called on the US government and UN Security Council to make sure that if there is an intervention, the human rights of the Haitian people are protected and all troops adhere to the highest standards of international humanitarian and human rights law.

"An armed intervention could repeat the experience of Somalia, where unarmed civilians were killed by forces acting under UN authorization," Amnesty International said. "Any invading force should be monitored by independent, international observers to make sure human rights abuses don't take place or are immediately investigated if they do occur."

Those fears sharpened on 31 July, when UN Security Council resolution 940 authorized a military intervention but failed to refer to the need for foreign troops to respect and protect Haitians' human rights.

Amnesty International has also made clear that the international community's attention should not simply centre on a possible invasion. Real and long-term commitment to protecting human rights in Haiti must involve:

- continuing pressure by other governments, in the region and elsewhere in the world, and by international and regional organizations such as the UN and OAS, on the de facto authorities in Haiti to immediately stop human rights violations by the official security forces and their henchmen;

- immediate resumption of international monitoring of the human rights situation in Haiti to continue until the human rights situation is improved and stabilized;

• those responsible for torture, "disappearances" and killings being brought to justice in a process which accords with international fair trial standards; and

• ensuring protection of refugees: refugees should not be expected to return without a clear and stable improvement in the human rights situation and effective monitoring of their safety; and at no stage should any asylum seeker be returned against their will unless a fair and thorough examination of their case establishes that they can safely return.

\ENDS