

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 36/003/2007 (Public)
News Service No.: 065
3 April 2007

Haiti: Jean Dominique, seven years on – forgotten by justice?

Seven years on from the murder of journalist Jean Léopold Dominique, Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the alleged culprits have not been brought to justice.

On 3 April 2000, Jean Dominique was shot dead by an unknown assailant in front of the offices of his radio station, *Radio Haïti Inter*, in Port-au-Prince. The station's guard, Jean-Claude Louissaint, was killed at the same time. The murders caused dismay in Haiti, especially because Jean Dominique was a well-respected figure who had been speaking out openly in favour of democracy for four decades. His killing was a serious blow to freedom of expression in Haiti.

Amnesty International is concerned that those who actually carried out the killing as well as those who gave the orders are still enjoying total impunity. Since the judicial investigation into the case was opened in 2000, at least six examining magistrates have worked on it without managing to produce a full report allowing all those responsible to be identified.

The investigation into the killings of Jean Léopold Dominique and Jean Claude Louissaint has been characterized by prevarication, inactivity, threats against the examining magistrates and witnesses, lack of support from the Haitian authorities and constant referrals from one court to another.

Today, once again, Amnesty International is calling on the Haitian authorities to take all necessary steps to ensure that a thorough and serious investigation reaches a successful conclusion and that full light is shed on the killings so that all those believed to be responsible – be they the actual killers or those who gave the orders – can be brought to justice.

The Haitian authorities must commit themselves once and for all to fighting impunity.

Additional information

In March 2003, the third examining magistrate to take up the case presented his concluding report in which he committed six individuals for trial. Three of the suspects were released on appeal in February 2004. The other three were arrested by police but escaped from the National Penitentiary in February 2005.

Michelle Montas, the widow of Jean Dominique, escaped an attempt on her life in her home in December 2002. Maxime Séïde, one of her bodyguards, was killed in the incident.

Two of the main suspects arrested by police at the start of the investigation have died in circumstances that have never been clarified. In October 2000, Jean Wilner Lalane died while having surgery in questionable circumstances when he was under police guard. His body later disappeared. The second suspect, Panel Renéus, was attacked and lynched while being held at a police station in Léogâne (south of the capital).