

UWA 05/04 Haiti crisis urgent web action

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Haiti: Disarmament and accountability must start now

Haitian citizens continue to live in an atmosphere of insecurity and fear, months after the end of a conflict which saw the departure of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Armed groups throughout the country are carrying out human rights abuses, such as attacks on judges, journalists and other civilians. These abuses have in part been fuelled by the easy availability and widespread possession of guns.

The Haitian interim government, in place since February, has not taken effective action towards disarmament; neither has it acted impartially in its efforts to combat impunity. While the authorities have moved swiftly to arrest members of former President Aristide's *Fanmi Lavalas* party, they have not acted with the same commitment against, for example, those accused or convicted of perpetrating grave human rights violations, some of whom played a prominent role in the recent insurgency.

The Haitian authorities, with the help of the international community, can take a vital step towards a lasting stability in Haiti by initiating a disarmament program, and by bringing to justice all those who have committed human rights abuses during the recent insurgency.

Take Action!

Urge the government of Haiti to establish a disarmament program, and help Haiti break its history of violence.

Sample letter

Dear [Mr. Gousse/ Mr. Charles],

Although the Haitian interim government has been in office since the beginning of March, it has not taken effective action towards disarmament. Nor has it demonstrated that the law is applied impartially to human rights abusers from all sides of the political spectrum.

The interim government needs to show its commitment to a stable and secure future for Haiti by making disarmament of armed groups and the investigation of past and current human rights abuses a priority.

The deployment of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) offers a major opportunity to break Haiti's cycle of violence once and for all.

As Haiti's [Minister of Justice and National Security/Director of the Haiti National Police], I urge you to consider the following recommendations as crucial towards establishing the rule of law and a long-term secure environment that enables respect for human rights, including the safety and security of civilians:

- Take immediate, effective and thorough action, in conjunction with MINUSTAH, to establish a disarmament program aimed at all unofficial armed groups across Haiti, including pro-Aristide militias, armed gangs affiliated with other political organizations, former insurgents, other irregular groups controlling areas of the country and non-political armed gangs;
- That all convicted human rights offenders with pending sentences for human rights convictions and all escapees are taken into custody to serve their sentences;
- In consultation with MINUSTAH and regional bodies, develop a long-term strategy to address impunity for past violations. As a priority, the process should identify an appropriate venue in which Louis-Jodel Chamblain and other alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses can receive a fair, open trial in accordance with international standards;
- Make clear that there will be no amnesties for human rights abuses and that anyone found to be responsible for committing such abuses will be unable to hold public office.

Your public commitment to these recommendations will be an important step towards safe-guarding the Haitian population.

Yours sincerely,

Appeals to

Monsieur Bernard Gousse

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