

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NETWORK

*Take immediate action***Haiti****Human rights defenders at risk: Rénan Hédouville and other members of CARLI, and lawyer Mario Joseph.**

Lawyers Rénan Hédouville and Mario Joseph, who have worked on behalf of those who suffered human rights abuses at the hands of the army while Haiti was under military rule, have been receiving numerous anonymous telephone death threats. Amnesty International believes both men's lives are in danger. M. Hédouville has reported the threats repeatedly to the media and the authorities, but nothing has been done to protect him.

Rénan Hédouville is Secretary-General of the *Comité des Avocats pour le Respect des Libertés Individuelles* (CARLI), Lawyers' Committee for the Respect of Individual Liberties. He has been told that he will be killed unless he stops his work defending human rights and accusing former army officers of human rights violations.

CARLI is an active human rights organization that documents and investigates human rights violations via a telephone "hotline". In August 2004 it protested publicly after a jury acquitted former paramilitary leader Louis Jodel-Chamblain and senior ex-military police officer Jackson Joanis of the September 1993 murder of pro-democracy activist Antoine Izméry. Izméry had been a prominent supporter of former president Aristide.

Mario Joseph is currently representing prominent supporters of ex-president Aristide's *Famille Lavalas* party, who have recently been imprisoned without charge. He has received numerous death threats because of this. As a lawyer working for the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), International Lawyers Office, he defended and assisted victims of human rights abuses committed under the military government of 1991 to 1994; notably parents of victims of the April 1994 Raboteau massacre, a joint military and paramilitary operation attack on a shanty town where support for Aristide was strong, in which an estimated 20 people were killed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president of Haiti, was overthrown in a 1991 coup by military leaders. Thousands of his supporters were murdered over the three years of military rule that ended with US military intervention in 1994, that restored Aristide to power. He was re-elected in 2000.

In February 2004, after months of unrest and demonstrations, conflict broke out in the country's fourth largest town, Gonaïves, when armed opponents of the government and former soldiers attacked police stations and courthouses, forcing the police and local authorities to flee. The conflict spread throughout the country and Aristide left the country in disputed circumstances. A transitional government was formed in early March, but the atmosphere of lawlessness that followed Aristide's departure remains.

Despite the presence of United Nations forces, a large number of armed groups are active throughout the country, including former military forces and militias loyal to former President Aristide. Heavily armed remnants of the Haitian Army, disbanded by Aristide, are now allegedly patrolling the streets of the capital, Port-au-Prince, saying they intend to "secure" the city.

RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL LEGAL NETWORK MEMBERS

1. Write a letter to the Director General of the Haitian National Police, sending copies to the Minister of Justice and Public Security

All International Legal Network members are requested to send a letter in their capacity as lawyers to the Director General of the Haitian National Police along the lines of the model letter below. Members may use the standard letters in the word files below and simply amend their details before printing out. Members are also requested to send a copy of the letter to the Minister of Justice and Public Security. Members are requested to keep a copy of their letter for their own records, in case further action is required on this case. See the address list below for addresses, fax numbers and, where available, email addresses.

2. Contact your local Bar Association asking them to support this action

Members of the Legal Network are requested to write letters or send a copy of these letters to their Bar Associations and other professional legal organizations, asking them to take action on this case.

Feedback

Register your action

So that we can measure the amount of action that the International Legal Network has taken on this case, all individual members that send a letter are also requested to send an email to the Network Coordinator: ilnaction@amnesty.org –writing ‘**Haiti 1**’ in the subject line and including your **name, section and lawyers’ group** in the email. Your action will be registered on the total number of letters sent at the top of the action.

Send the ILN Coordinator any replies you receive

If you receive a reply to any of your letters, please send a copy to:

International Legal Network Coordinator
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
UNITED KINGDOM
Fax: +44 207 956 1157

We will ensure that this important information is posted on the website and circulated to other members of the Network to assist in their action.

Model letter

Dear [title],

As a lawyer in [your country], I am writing to express concern for the safety of Rénan Hédouville, other members of the *Comité des Avocats pour le Respect des Libertés Individuelles* (CARLI) and Mario Joseph.

M. Hédouville and M. Joseph have reportedly received numerous anonymous telephone death threats. M. Hédouville has been told that he will be killed unless he stops his work defending human rights and accusing former army officers of human rights violations. M. Hédouville

has reported the threats repeatedly to the media and the authorities, but, according to reports, nothing has been done to protect him. Amnesty International believes that the lives of both M Hédouville and M. Joseph are in danger.

I urge you to publicly declare that the police and government of Haiti recognise the important role of human rights defenders. The work of human rights lawyers is protected under international law, and enshrined in the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, Article 16 of which states:

“Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference;”

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms further states in Article 9 (3) (c) that everyone has the right

“To offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

I am gravely concerned that it is increasingly difficult for members of CARLI and other lawyers defending human rights to carry out their legitimate work on behalf of victims of human rights violations, due to threats and harassment. I urge the Haitian government to adhere to its obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as laid out above, and in the Organization of American States (OAS) Resolution 1842 on Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, which urges:

“... member states to step up their efforts to adopt the necessary measures, in keeping with their domestic law and with internationally accepted principles and standards, to safeguard the lives, personal safety, and freedom of expression of human rights defenders.”

I urge you to take immediate action to ensure the protection of M.Réan Hédouville, M. Mario Joseph and other members of the *Comité des Avocats pour le Respect des Libertés Individuelles* (CARLI), and to publicly declare that threats which hinder the work of human rights defenders will not be tolerated in Haiti.

Yours sincerely,

APPEALS TO: (It can be very difficult to send faxes to Haiti. Please keep trying)

Director General of the Haitian National Police

M. Léon Charles

Directeur Général de la Police Nationale d'Haiti

Grand Quartier Général de la Police

12 rue Oscar Pacot

Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Fax: +509 245 7374 (if someone answers, say "La ligne de fax s'il vous plaît")

Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur

Minister of Justice and Public Security

Monsieur Bernard Gousse

Ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité Publique

Ministère de la Justice

19 Avenue Charles Sumner

Port-au-Prince, Haïti

Fax: +509 245 0474 (if someone answers, say "La ligne de fax s'il vous plaît")
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre