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## **Haiti: One more step towards the end of impunity**

*The arrest of former military general Prosper Avril on 26 May could mark a step forward by the Haitian justice system in its struggle against impunity for human rights violations, Amnesty International said today.*

*"The gravity of the human rights violations committed during General Avril's period in power, from his 1988 coup d'état to his departure in March 1990, cannot be ignored," the organization continued, acknowledging the importance of bringing those responsible to justice.*

*Avril was arrested under a warrant dating from 1996, on charges of assault, torture and illegal arrest of six Haitian activists in 1989 and 1990. The six men were already awarded damages in a civil case brought in 1994, in which a United States district court ruled that Avril bore personal responsibility for their interrogation and torture.*

*"This is an opportunity for the Haitian justice system to demonstrate, once again, that it can provide a fair and equitable trial for those accused of human rights violations," Amnesty International said.*

### **Background**

*General Avril was chief of presidential security under President Jean-Claude Duvalier, until the latter was ousted from power in February 1986. Under Avril's leadership reports of torture and ill-treatment of political and common-law prisoners were widespread.*

*Haiti has recently taken important steps against impunity, including the November 2000 trial of members of the former military and paramilitary implicated in the 1994 Raboteau massacre. The civilian Haitian National Police (HNP) replaced the notorious Haitian Armed Forces (*Forces Armées d'Haïti*) after it was disbanded in 1995. The first trial of HNP officers accused of human rights violations took place in 2000 as well, when four officers were*

*convicted of the extrajudicial execution of eleven young men in the Carrefour-Feuilles neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince in May 1999.*

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