

URGENT ACTION



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11 January 2008

UA 10/08 Fear for safety/ death threats

HAITI Frantzco Joseph (m), aged 24, president of Grand Ravine Community Council for *Human Rights*, (*Conseil Communautaire de Droits Humains de Grand Ravine –CCDH-GR*)
His wife and children
Yveson Piton (m), aged 25, supporter of the CCDH-GR and employee at the Grand Ravine secondary school
His wife and daughter

Frantzco Joseph, president of the Grand Ravine Community Council for Human Rights (*Conseil Communautaire de Droits Humains de Grand Ravine – CCDH-GR*), has been threatened and intimidated by armed individuals. Yveson Piton, supporter of the Grand Ravine Community Council for Human Rights has also been intimidated. Their lives may be in danger.

On 22 December 2007, Frantzco Joseph was threatened by armed members of a gang operating in Grand Ravine, in the south of the capital Port-au-Prince. Frantzco Joseph says that he received threatening phone calls from the gang leader, who told Frantzco that “it is now an open war” between them. Frantzco Joseph told Amnesty International that prior to the threatening phone calls, his cousin was beaten by the gang members to send Frantzco Joseph a warning. Frantzco Joseph and his family have left the area in fear for their safety.

This follows the refusal of Frantzco Joseph, who is also the local representative of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (*Commission nationale sur le désarmement, le démantèlement et la réintégration*, CNDDR), other members of the CCDH-GR and the community to turn a blind eye to the crimes allegedly committed by the members of the armed gang. Members of the gang were temporarily barred from Grand Ravine. Earlier on, testimony from the CCDH-GR led to the arrest of four members of the same gang for their alleged implication in the rape of women and girls in Grand Ravine and the extortion of money from local people. One of the alleged perpetrators has since been released by the authorities. Witnesses reported that on 5 January, the gang leader returned to the community and went to Frantzco Joseph’s house looking for him, but he had already moved to a safe location.



Yveson Piton, a supporter of the CCDH-GR, has also been threatened and intimidated by armed members of the same gang. On 21 December, around 4am, he was attacked in his house by armed men. He managed to escape his attackers but his wife was beaten by the gang members. On 22 December, he received death threats by phone, when the caller said that Yveson Piton and Frantzco Joseph “would not see the day of 24 December”. He fled the area with his wife and his daughter. He has been forced to stay away from his job at Grand Ravine’s secondary school as a result of the threats.

Frantzco Joseph has been the president of the CCDH-GR since September 2006, when Bruner Esterne, the previous CCDH-GR president, was killed by members of an armed gang (see UA 259/06, 28 September 2006).

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Grand Ravine Community Council for Human Rights was created in August 2006 on the initiative of the Association of University Graduates Motivated for a Haiti with Rights (*Association des Universitaires Motivés pour un Haïti de Droit* - AUMOHD). The CCDH-GR was set up with the help of survivors and families of victims of the 20 August 2005 killings that took place during a football match in the neighboring community of Martissant. AUMOHD has been leading different initiatives on conflict resolution and disarmament with the involvement of the local population and grassroots organizations.

Bruner Esterne, the former coordinator of the CCDH-GR and eyewitness to these killings, was shot dead by three unknown individuals on 21 September 2006. His killers have yet to be brought to justice.

The National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration was established by the government in September 2006. The commission is mandated to ensure the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the various armed gangs operating across the country.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern for the safety of Frantzco Joseph, Yveson Piton, their families and other members of the Grand Ravine Community Council for Human Rights;
- urging the authorities to provide Frantzco Joseph, Yveson Piton, their families and other members of the Grand Ravine Community Council for Human Rights with adequate protection and to guarantee their safety according to their wishes;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the threats received by Frantzco Joseph, and the intimidation of Yveson Piton, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

President

Monsieur René Garcia Préal
Président de la République d'Haïti,
Palais National, Champ de Mars,
Port-au-Prince, HAÏTI (W.I.)

Fax: 011 509 228 2772

Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President
Préal

Minister of Justice and Public Security

Monsieur René Magloire
Ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité Publique,
19 Avenue Charles Sumner,
Port-au-Prince, HAÏTI (W.I.)

Fax: 011 509 245 0474 (please keep trying
and ask for the fax line "la ligne de fax s'il-vous-
plaît")

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

General Director of the Haiti National Police

Mario Andresol
Directeur Général de la Police Nationale d'Haïti
Grand Quartier Général de la Police,
12 rue Oscar Pacot,
Port-au-Prince, Haïti (W.I.)

Fax: 011 509 245 7374

Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur Général/Dear
Mr Andresol

Head of Human Rights Section- MINUSTAH & Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Thierry Fagart
Human Rights Section, MINUSTAH, 385, Ave.
John Brown, Bourdon, B.P. 557,
Port-au-Prince, Haïti (W.I.)

Fax: 011 509 244 9366/ 9367

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

AUMOHD, Association des Universitaires Motivés pour
un Haïti de Droit
(Association of University Graduates Motivated for a Haiti
with Rights)
c/o Frantzco Joseph and CCDH-GR, 4, Delmas 47,
Port-au-Prince, Haïti (W.I.)

Ambassador H.E. Raymond A. Joseph
Embassy of the Republic of Haïti
2311 Massachusetts Ave N.W.
Washington DC 20008

Fax: 1 202 745 7215

Email: embassy@haiti.org

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after
22 February 2008.**