

## Haitians Say Police Killed 13 in Pro-Aristide Slum

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By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - Residents of a Port-au-Prince slum accused Haitian police on Wednesday of executing 13 people believed to be supporters of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Police denied the accusations. Workers at the General Hospital morgue in the capital said they received the bodies of seven people killed by gunshots in the Fort National neighborhood, and a Reuters reporter saw pools of dried blood at the site where neighbors said the killings occurred.

The allegations came as Haitian interim authorities launched an offensive to end a wave of pro- and anti-Aristide violence that has killed at least 70 people since Sept. 30.

Residents of the populous Fort National slum, where Aristide enjoyed strong support, said police stormed a house on Tuesday and executed 13 people they had forced to lie on the ground.

"Heavily armed policemen made a raid here and killed everybody. There was no resistance and nobody had a gun," a neighbor named Jacqueline told Reuters. "It was massacre. I heard the victims crying, 'No, no,'" said the woman, who did not give her full name for fear of reprisals.

"When they (the police) came, they said very loudly, 'Everybody on the ground!' One of them said 'Kill them,'" said Arnoud Jean-Louis, 36, another neighbor. "Then, I heard a series of gun bursts, the next thing I saw the police were dragging them out to put them in a vehicle."

About two dozen residents of Fort National and the adjacent Bel-Air neighborhood rushed to the hospital morgue to try to identify the bodies of loved ones. Several left, weeping, without finding those they were looking for, and accused police of dumping bodies in secret graves.

"They continue to kill us and everybody finds it okay because our lives don't count," said Jean-Louis who blamed former soldiers on the police force for most of the killings.

The police director for the province that includes the capital, Commissioner Renand Etienne, said he was unaware of any police operation in Fort National on Tuesday. He denied that former soldiers or other police officers were involved in human rights abuses.

Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president, was overthrown in a military coup during his first term in 1991 and disbanded the military when he was restored to office three years later. He began a second term in 2001 and was forced into exile amid an armed revolt in February.

Haiti's police force includes many former soldiers who took part in the rebellion, and Aristide supporters have accused them of killing and illegally arresting Aristide partisans.

"They want to kill us because we support Aristide and we will support him for the rest of our lives," said Fort National resident Roosevelt Gilles.