

CARLI condemns the attacks against the journalists of Le Nouvelliste and a news crew from Télé Ginen

Port-au-Prince, January 17, 2005 (AHP)- The Committee of Lawyers for the Respect of Individual Liberties (CARLI), spoke out Monday to condemn the savage attack against Claude Bernard Sérant and Jonel Juste on Friday January 14 by armed individuals in the populist district of Bel-Air.

CARLI also expressed indignation at the behavior of the police toward television cameramen from Télé Ginen, who were forced to turn over their camera to the police on the pretext that they had done a poor job of filming the unfolding of a police operation at Cité de Dieu on January 13.

According to CARLI, these practices show the extent of intolerance and barbarity that is characteristic of Haitian society, and recalled that journalism is a freely practiced legitimate profession, recognized and protected by the Constitution and international human rights treaties.

"The journalist freely exercises his profession under the law. This exercise can not be submitted to any authorization nor censorship except in the event of war; he can receive and transmit information and ideas by any means of expression available, without regard to borders", recalled CARLI.

CARLI went on to express its deep concern at reports suggesting that sitting judges are the object of threats, pressure and intimidation from officials at the Ministry of Justice.

CARLI stressed that justice is to be dispensed in an atmosphere free of any unjustified intervention or interference, and asked the authorities instead to offer Haitian judges more resources with respect to the fulfillment of their mission in order to facilitate an improved distribution of justice, which is a sine qua non condition for the construction of a state governed by the rule of law.

Several foreign journalists currently reporting from Haiti have been outraged at the latest attacks suffered by the two groups of Haitian journalists: the two reporters from Le Nouvelliste and a news crew from Télé Ginen.

The foreign reporters considered that the assaults on freedom of the press represent very serious setbacks for any system that wishes to be democratic.

They also denounced any selective or discriminatory coverage of events. "This is an attitude that is contrary to professional ethics and risks encouraging and aggravating the polarization of Haitian society, which is already torn apart", they said.

Ronald Saint-Jean also criticized what he indicated was an effort by NCHR to trivialize the case of Jimmy Charles by explaining that he was released before he was executed.

AHP has been unsuccessful in its attempt to reach an NCHR official by telephone in order to obtain NCHR's version of the facts.

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At least 10 people have been killed and dozens others arrested in the latest police operations in the populist districts

Port-au-Prince, January 17, 2005 (AHP)- One person was killed and several others arrested this Monday by officers of the Haitian police during a new intervention in the populist district of Fort National.

According to local residents, the victim is known as Ti Pouchon and is not a criminal, contrary to the allegations of the police.

In related news, no information has been brought forth to date to shed light on the killings of close to 10 youths this past October in this same neighborhood by men wearing police uniforms and riding aboard a police vehicle.

At least ten people have been killed and dozens others arrested last week alone during police operations conducted in the various populist districts of Port-au-Prince.

Officials of the Haitian National Police have explained that these individuals, described as bandits by the police, were killed during exchanges of gunfire with officers of the PNH.

Residents in these populist districts reject these accusations and instead are accusing the police of wishing to silence everyone whom they suspect of not supporting the plan to hold elections this year.

In addition, several schools in the center of the capital, particularly those on Lamarre Street at the entrance to the populist district of Bel-Air, said they were facing great difficulties this Monday when police officers who were pursuing a group of armed men fired tear gas grenades, some of which landed in the school playgrounds.

The directors of these schools asked the police to act with greater discipline and professionalism in the course of these operations to prevent students and other members of the public from becoming victims.

For their part, residents of Dieu Village continue to abandon the neighborhood, saying they fear renewed police operations.

According to residents of this community, six people including an adolescent have already been killed by officers of the PNH.

"The worst thing is that anyone at all can end up a victim because the police consider everyone they see through their rifle sites to be bandits", exclaimed an elderly man who felt compelled to abandon his home.

The residents of Village de Dieu asked officials of the Haitian National Police (PNH) and MINUSTAH to help the police conduct their operations lucidly to prevent creating any more innocent victims from among the population.

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