

**Haiti: Watchdog condemns murder of journalist, calls for safeguards for media
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Text of press release by US-based Inter American Press Association on 24 January

Miami, 21 January 2005: In a letter sent by the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) to the prime minister of Haiti, the organization condemned the murder of a journalist and asked for a prompt investigation, as well as safeguards for journalists in that country, where there have been reports in past days of incidents of violence against the media.

The letter addressed to Haitian Prime Minister Gerald Latortue and signed by Committee on Freedom of the Press and information chairman Gonzalo Marroquin condemns the murder of Abdias Jean, a correspondent for a Miami radio station and deplors other incidents against journalists and the media.

The matter of violence and other murders that remain unpunished in Haiti will be part of the agenda during an IAPA Emergency Forum to be held in Port-au-Prince on 3 February. In early October, the IAPA organized a training seminar on journalism in danger zones in which 30 journalists from around the country participated.

The following is the complete text of the protest letter:

"Mr Prime Minister:

On behalf of the 1,300 representatives of media outlets who are members of the Inter American Press Association throughout the western hemisphere, we express our condemnation of the murder of reporter Abdias Jean. We ask for an immediate investigation to find those responsible and demand there be the necessary safeguards for a free press in Haiti.

According to reports received at our organization, on 14 January radio reporter Abdias Jean was covering a police operation and raid in the Village de Dieu sector of Port-au-Prince - considered a stronghold of supporters of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. According to the information received, Jean was allegedly killed in retaliation for having witnessed the execution of three children in a case in which members of the National Police are also being blamed.

The reporter's murder is a serious attack against press freedom and the public's right to information since several people stated that Jean identified himself as a journalist before being killed.

Therefore, we urge you to take adequate and immediate measures so that the respective authorities can launch an in-depth investigation to bring those responsible to justice.

We have also been made aware of a series of attacks reported in the past few days against media workers. Last Friday two other journalists, Claude Bernard Serant and Jonel Juste,

from Le Nouvelliste, were assaulted by Aristide supporters. On another occasion, in recent days, the police confiscated videos and working materials from Harry Francillon, from Tele Ginen, in Port-au-Prince. We have also been informed of death threats against Joseph Guyler Delva, president of the Haitian Journalists' Association.

Mr Prime Minister, we cannot ignore the fact that one of the pillars of democracy is a free press. Therefore, it is essential that journalists be given respect and the necessary safeguards to conduct their work freely.

We hope that the attacks and murder of Abdias Jean, as well as the cases of other murdered journalists, Jean Leopold Dominique, Brignol Lindor, and Gerad Denoze, are investigated and those responsible severely punished promptly."

Source: US-based Inter American Press Association, Miami, in English 24 Jan 05

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