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Quotes: 'The authorities don't even acknowledge violations are taking place and the majority of the press are simply ignoring what is going on.' - Judy Dacruz, a human rights lawyer in Haiti on apparent executions by police of government protesters (A08); People wont move around the country in day-to-day activities. They wont go shopping. They wont participate in elections in the same way. - David Beer, commissioner of the UN police force in Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Abdias Jean was eating lunch near his home in the seaside slum of God's Village last month when he spotted a group of police officers walking in his direction. Jean, a correspondent for a news program aired on a Miami radio station, ducked into a friend's house.

Ten days earlier, residents say, police executed a 17-year-old girl and an unarmed man during a raid in the same neighborhood. Jean was not taking any chances. But the black-clad officers had seen Jean and ordered him out of the house. They tied his wrists with his own belt, dragged him a block away and put a bullet through his head, witnesses said.

Jean's murder is one among a spate of summary executions in poor neighborhoods that witnesses say were committed by the police during raids ostensibly against criminals and armed groups opposed to the government. It is not clear whether Jean's murder was related to his journalistic work.

"The human rights situation in Haiti is critical right now," said Judy Dacruz, an independent human rights lawyer based in Port-au-Prince. "There has been a complicity of silence about these killings. The authorities don't even acknowledge

violations are taking place, and the majority of the press are simply ignoring what is going on."

Dacruz has documented 14 cases, including the murder of Jean, since October, in which witnesses said police officers summarily executed unarmed people. In three other cases, people who were taken into police custody either showed up dead or were never seen again.

Nearly one year since U.S. Marines escorted former President Jean- Bertrand Aristide from Haiti, some human rights observers say state- sponsored abuses have continued - or even escalated. Most of the abuses have taken place in poor parts of Port-au-Prince, where support for Aristide still runs strong and armed groups demanding his return defy the government and clash with police. While some of those executed were members of Aristide's Lavalas party, most appear to have had no political affiliation, other than the fact that they lived in a neighborhood sympathetic to Aristide.

Government and police officials have denied the police have committed summary executions. In some cases, they have speculated that former soldiers or pro-Lavalas armed gangs might be responsible, while in others they have claimed not to know about the murders but conceded police were in the area at the time.

"I guarantee the police are not involved in these kinds of actions," police spokesman Gessy Coicou said at a news conference last week. "Personally, I don't know Abdias Jean, I haven't heard of him and I haven't seen his name in any of the files I have. Many journalists have reported that there are many witnesses. I would advise them to file a complaint." (Jean's mother has indeed filed a formal complaint with the nation's chief prosecutor.)

Aristide himself was accused by rights groups and many in the international community of tolerating and perpetrating abuses, which was a factor in pushing

the Organization of American States to freeze millions of dollars in aid to his government.

In contrast, abuses under the government of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue have gotten scant censure from the United States, Canada and France, critics of Aristide that led an occupying force in Haiti after his ouster. Meanwhile, recent human rights violations have occurred despite the presence of 7,500 UN peacekeepers whose mandate includes training Haitian police as well as promoting and protecting human rights.

David Beer, commissioner of the 1,400 UN civilian police in Haiti, said part of the problem is that a wave of violence has forced peacekeepers to focus on fighting armed groups, some of them Aristide backers.

Beer formed a team of 24 UN civilian police officers last month to investigate summary executions allegedly committed by the Haitian police, as well as the killings of at least 10 prisoners in a crackdown at the national penitentiary on Dec. 1.

"It's worse than I would have expected," Beer said. "If the human rights situation isn't changing, and obviously changing, and the public has the confidence that it is changing, we can't have a secure and stable environment. People won't move around the country in day-to-day activities. They won't go shopping. They won't participate in elections in the same way."

The first round of presidential elections is set for Nov. 13.

Lavalas leaders have accused the government of a campaign of repression meant to stamp out support for Aristide and to dissuade the poor from voting. The government says it is battling illegal gangs that aim to destabilize the government.

In the slum of Bel Air, an Aristide stronghold, a man named Alfred, his eyes red and glazed, stared blankly at the cinder-block wall of his tiny home last week. His wife sat slumped in a white plastic chair. They declined to identify themselves further, fearing police reprisal. A week ago, their son Jeff, 14, left to buy bread a few blocks away. They heard gunfire - commonplace in Bel Air - and soon after, two of Jeff's aunts carried his blood-soaked body back to the house. One witness said a police officer had shot Jeff in the leg and then, when the boy collapsed and cried for help, shot him in the chest.

Nobody has come to investigate, and Jeff's parents say they will not file a complaint.

"We'll leave it to God to do justice," said his mother.

"I lifted him in my palm when he was a baby," said Jeff's aunt, "and now I bring him back to this house covered in blood. If we file a complaint, nothing will come of it. They won't take it seriously. They'll keep on killing us."