
The interim Prime Minister denies accusations that high-ranking officials in his office were behind any attempt to assassinate Yvon Neptune

Port-au-Prince, February 25, 2005 (AHP)- Interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue denied statements Friday made by an escaped detainee from the National Penitentiary charging that senior officials in the Office of the Prime Minister were involved in a plot to assassinate former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.

Anel Bélizaire, who took up arms against the Aristide government during the insurrection of February 2004, said Thursday, February 24, that he had been approached by high-ranking officials of the prime minister's office asking him to commit the assassination by taking advantage of confusion that was ultimately created Saturday February 19 at the National Penitentiary by a commando team that dragged willingly or unwillingly close to 500 detainees and prisoners out of the penitentiary.

Bélizaire declared that he refused to go along with the plot because, he said, he is not a criminal.

The Prime Minister said that his office does not engage in such practices.

"On the contrary," said Mr. Latortue, "it is I who intervened to bring about the transfer of Yvon Neptune to a decent cell". He added that he is working hard to win respect for the position of prime minister.

Gérard Latortue as well as Minister of Justice Bernard Gousse was not in Haiti when the commando action took place.

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At least 15 people have been killed during an operation by the police and other armed men in the capital's populist districts

Port-au-Prince, February 25, 2005 (AHP)- At least 15 individuals have been killed and several others injured this Friday (February 25) during various raids by the police and other armed civilians in several districts of Port-au-Prince:

At least 10 people were killed in the neighborhoods of St-Martin, Delmas and Tiremasse Street alone.

According to eyewitness accounts including those of foreign journalists who were on the fringes of the scene this was not a matter of clashes between armed groups but rather straightforward killings.

One man who is mentally ill and is well known in the neighborhood is among the victims who were lying bathed in pools of blood until mid-afternoon.

Many area residents have accused the interim government of "wishing to eliminate the residents of the populist districts with an eye toward the bogus elections they wish to impose on the country". They also singled out MINUSTAH whom they accuse of failing to protect persons in danger.

Several individuals were also killed in Village de Dieu Thursday night. It was in this vicinity that the journalist Abdias Jean was murdered on February 14 as he was covering a police raid.

Area residents are accusing commandos who they say are paid to commit summary executions.

Sources close to the interim government affirm for their part that the violence that has taken place over the last 24 hours is the work of individuals involved in a movement the government has itself dubbed Operation Baghdad.

Ti Roro, a resident of the Saint-Martin district who was injured this Friday.

Gunfire was also heard in the center of the capital at midday. This caused a panic and a slowdown in commercial activity.

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