

> **PRESS RELEASE**

>>

>> **For Immediate Release**

>> **(323) 757-8900**

>>

>> **March 7, 2005**

>>

>>

>> **CONGRESSWOMAN WATERS TRAVELS TO HAITI;**

>>

>> **VISITS FORMER PRIME MINISTER NEPTUNE IN PRISON; AND**

>>

>> **DEMANDS THAT THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT RELEASE HIM**

>>

>> **AND ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS**

>>

>>

>>

>> Washington, D.C. -- Today, Rep. Maxine  
>> Waters (CA-35) traveled  
>> to Haiti to visit Haiti's former Prime Minister Yvon  
>> Neptune, who is being  
>> detained illegally in prison.  
>> She was met at the airport in Port-au-Prince by U.S.  
>> Embassy officials early  
>> this morning and immediately traveled to the  
>> National Penitentiary, where she  
>> met with Prime Minister Neptune, as well as former  
>> Interior Minister Joceleme  
>> Privert and former delegate Jacques Mathelier. The  
>> Congresswoman spent an  
>> hour with Prime Minister Neptune, discussing his  
>> health and the treatment he has  
>> received in prison, after which she returned to the  
>> airport and held a press  
>> conference.

>>

>> "I urge the interim government of Haiti  
>> to set Prime Minister  
>> Neptune free and release all political prisoners in  
>> Haitian prisons," said the  
>> Congresswoman. "The interim government's  
>> repression of dissenters like Prime  
>> Minister Neptune must end immediately. The whole  
>> world is watching."

>>

>> Prime Minister Neptune has languished in  
>> prison in Haiti since J  
>> une 27, 2004. His life has been endangered  
>> throughout his confinement. There  
>> were reports of a plot to assassinate him last  
>> November, a massacre in the  
>> National Penitentiary on December 1, and a revolt in  
>> the National  
>> Penitentiary on February 19. Prime Minister Neptune  
>> recently began a hunger

>> strike and has vowed not to eat until the unjust,  
 >> unsafe circumstances of his  
 >> confinement are addressed.  
 >>  
 >> "The conditions that I observed in the  
 >> prison where Prime Minister  
 >> Neptune is being held were deplorable," reported the  
 >> Congresswoman. "Prime  
 >> Minister Neptune was weak and could only speak in a  
 >> whispering voice. He  
 >> insisted that he had been jailed without  
 >> justification and that he had committed no  
 >> crime. He has not been allowed to go before a judge  
 >> to challenge his  
 >> confinement as required under the constitution of  
 >> Haiti, and he believes he has been  
 >> targeted to be killed."  
 >>  
 >> "I tried to convince Prime Minister  
 >> Neptune to give up his hunger  
 >> strike or at least accept temporary asylum from the  
 >> United States, so that he  
 >> could be examined by an American physician tasked  
 >> with ensuring that his  
 >> hunger strike has not caused him bodily harm,"  
 >> explained the  
 >> Congresswoman. "However, Prime Minister Neptune  
 >> refused to end his hunger  
 >> strike, which protests his unjust imprisonment by  
 >> the interim government of  
 >> Haiti. He said he will not leave Haiti, and he will  
 >> not accept political  
 >> asylum in another country. The only condition under  
 >> which he would be willing to  
 >> end his hunger strike is if the interim government  
 >> of Haiti releases him and  
 >> allows him to live as a free man in Haiti."  
 >>  
 >>  
 >> Congresswoman Waters was accompanied to  
 >> the prison by a delegation  
 >> of Americans who are concerned about human rights in  
 >> Haiti. The delegation  
 >> included Marguerite Laurent, the Haitian Lawyers  
 >> Leadership Network; Mario  
 >> Joseph, the Institute for Justice and Democracy in  
 >> Haiti;  
 >> Margaret Prescod, Global Women Strike; Lucie  
 >> Tondreau, Veye Yo and the Haiti  
 >> Action Committee; Dr. Serge Louis, Fanmi Lavalas;  
 >> and Dr. Jean-Paul Bennet, a  
 >> physician;  
 >>  
 >> Congresswoman Waters was joined on her  
 >> flight to Port-au-Prince  
 >> by Ira Kurzban, a prominent Florida attorney who

>> served as the attorney for  
>> President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the  
>> democratically-elected President of Haiti  
>> who was forced to leave Haiti in a coup d'etat on  
>> February 29, 2004.  
>>  
>> Upon arrival, Mr. Kurzban was told that the interim  
>> government of Haiti would  
>> not allow him to enter the country. Employees of  
>> American Airlines informed  
>> Mr. Kurzban that should he deplane, he would be  
>> immediately arrested.  
>> Nevertheless, Mr. Kurzban left the plane and  
>> demanded to know why he was not being  
>> allowed to enter Haiti, but was stopped by officials  
>> of the interim government,  
>> who forced him to get back on a plane and return to  
>> the United States.  
>>  
>> "The interim government's refusal to  
>> allow Ira Kurzban to join me  
>> in visiting Prime Minister Neptune is just another  
>> example of its systematic  
>> repression of everyone who is associated with  
>> President Aristide or his  
>> political party," said Congresswoman Waters. "This  
>> repression has got to stop.  
>>  
>> "I raveled to Haiti to determine the  
>> conditions of Prime Minister  
>> Neptune's imprisonment, assess his well-being, and  
>> work with the U.S. Embassy  
>> to obtain his immediate release from prison. I  
>> believe that our efforts will  
>> help to save Prime Minister Neptune's life, and I  
>> hope that they will lead to  
>> his immediate release from prison."  
>>  
>> ###