

Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti
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Urgent Haiti Human Rights Alert:
Attacks Against Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste on March 24 and 25, 2005

Each of the last two nights has seen attacks against Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste or his church, Sainte Claire's Catholic Church, located in a poor neighborhood of Delmas, Haiti. Fr. Jean-Juste is a prominent activist for peace and justice in Haiti, and spent seven weeks as a political prisoner in October and November 2004. Despite his high profile and the history of politically-motivated attacks against him, the United Nations Stabilization Mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH) declined to respond to his call for help after Friday's attack. We urge you to contact MINUSTAH today to insist that the Mission provide protection for Fr. Jean-Juste, especially at this evening's Easter Vigil mass at Ste. Claire's.

Late at night on Thursday, March 24, Fr. Jean-Juste surprised an intruder by the back door of the Ste. Claire rectory. The man fled, but later that night neighbors caught a man they believe to be the intruder, and handed him over to the police. On Friday evening, March 25, men dressed in black in one or more pickup trucks arrived outside Ste. Claire's and started shooting wildly, reportedly with automatic weapons. People contacted MINUSTAH on Fr. Jean-Juste's behalf, and were told by top officials that MINUSTAH would send people right away. As of late morning on Saturday, MINUSTAH police had not arrived, although Fr. Jean-Juste reports a MINUSTAH helicopter did fly over his church in the morning.

Late tonight Ste. Claire's will hold an Easter Vigil mass. The church will be filled with parishioners, most from the poor neighborhoods that have been targeted for political violence over the last year. There may be no electricity outside, and there will be few people out besides the churchgoers. Gunmen attacked Haitian Catholic churches filled with pro-democracy activists in 1987 (the St. Jean Bosco Massacre) and 1993 (the Antoine Izmerly Assassination). We must not let this happen again.

Please contact MINUSTAH immediately to insist that the Mission assure the security of Fr. Jean-Juste and Ste. Claire's church, especially at this evening's Easter Vigil mass. Your call or email does not need to be complicated, just communicate that: 1) you care about Fr. Jean-Juste, and 2) MINUSTAH should protect him. Calling is best because of the urgency, but if you are unable to get through (it may take a few tries, calls to Haiti are difficult today), please send an email or fax. More background information on Fr. Jean-Juste and MINUSTAH is below.

Contact Information

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