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## Haiti Urged to Stop Rights Abuses

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The Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Amnesty International urged Haiti's interim government Wednesday to crack down on human rights violators and stop reprisals against members of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government.

Concluding a two-week fact-finding mission, a delegation from the London-based rights group said at least four Aristide associates have been kidnapped and other citizens have been attacked or harassed since he fled Feb. 29.

It urged Haiti's U.S.-backed government to distance itself and act against rebels who have criminal records or are known human rights violators. Prime Minister Gerard Latortue has called the rebels "freedom fighters."

Other concerns include Haiti's weak judiciary, a lack of security, a climate of impunity and the failure of Haitian police and a U.S.-led peacekeeping force to disarm militias, Amnesty delegation leader Yvonne Terlingen said.

Critics allege Latortue's administration is targeting members of Aristide's government and the Lavalas political party for arrest. Several former government leaders are banned from leaving Haiti.

"By only arresting Lavalas supporters, the government is sending the wrong message," Terlingen said.

She added that Latortue's government "has failed in any way to act against the numbers of human rights violators who have become associated with it."

Haitian officials had no immediate comment on Amnesty's findings, which Terlingen said were based on interviews with more than 100 people, including several who claimed to have been victimized since Aristide's ouster.

Terlingen said her group was denied access to parts of the national penitentiary and that some detainees were under U.S. Marine guard.

In recent weeks, at least a dozen former Aristide supporters have been slain - most shot execution style with their hands tied behind their back.

On Tuesday, police arrested former Interior Minister Jocelerme Privert - the highest ranking official detained since Aristide's departure on Feb. 29. Privert was accused of planning the killings of government opponents.

Haiti's new leaders defend their right to detain those suspected of corruption and other crimes. U.S. officials, however, have pressured Latortue in recent days not to give government positions to leaders of armed groups who have criminal backgrounds.

The popular insurrection against Aristide began Feb. 5 and was led in part by Louis-Jodel Chamblain, a leader of a paramilitary group accused of killing more than 2,000 people in the 1990s.

Jodel-Chamblain was convicted in absentia and sentenced to two life prison terms for killing Aristide's justice minister and a chief financier.

The judge in the case, Napela Saintil, said Wednesday he was beaten by a man who claimed to be acting for Chamblain.

Chamblain's rebels still hold sway over international peacekeepers and police in northern Haiti. Peacekeeping troops and Haitian police consult with him to ensure security.

Haiti's new justice minister, Bernard Gousse, said Chamblain could be retried under Haitian law but that the government could also pardon him and Jean Tatoune, another rebel leader sentenced to life for his role in a massacre of Aristide supporters.

But a gang helped Tatoune escape from prison last year.

"We have to take into consideration that (Chamblain) helped get rid of two dictators in Haiti - (Jean-Claude) Duvalier and Aristide," Gousse said.

Amnesty International officials said its indifference to the

...sive record of certain rebel leaders could not be more stark," said Joanne Mariner, deputy director of the Americas Division of Human Rights Watch.

...s Joinet, Haiti expert for the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, is in Haiti and is expected to issue an informal report later this week.

In January, Joinet reported that Aristide's government had failed to live up to promises to end abuses against opponents. Joinet also criticized rights violations by anti-Aristide groups.

Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader, contends the United States coerced him into leaving. U.S. officials insist Aristide left Haiti voluntarily as the rebellion threatened to engulf the capital.

Aristide is now in Jamaica as a guest of the Jamaican government.

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