



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Amnesty International Calls for Action by Haiti on Abduction and Threats Against "September 30" Human Rights Defenders**

(New York) -- Amnesty International said today it has mobilized its global network of activists on behalf of two human rights defenders in Haiti, one abducted and the other facing physical threats. The organization is calling on the Haitian authorities to redouble efforts to find Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, who was abducted in August, and to protect Wilson Mesilien, who has recently been threatened with physical harm. The two are founding members of the September 30th Foundation, which has mobilized to defend the rights of victims of the 1991-94 military coup.

"The Haitian authorities have a responsibility under international law to protect the legitimate rights of human rights defenders to organize and take action without restrictions or fear of reprisals," said Renata Rendón, advocacy director for the Americas for Amnesty International USA.

Amnesty International is sending letters to Haiti and its embassies worldwide, urging officials to take action on behalf of the two men.

"The threats against Wilson Mesilien are very serious in light of the abduction of his colleague Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine," said Rendón. "Individuals and organizations, including members of the U.S. Congress, the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and human rights and solidarity organizations based in the United States and Great Britain have contacted President Preval and other Haitian officials to urge a more vigorous investigation into Pierre-Antoine's disappearance. The lack of available public information on the investigation's progress is disappointing. Amnesty International activists are now demanding that Haiti step up its efforts to find Pierre-Antoine and protect Mesilien."

Pierre-Antoine, 54, a psychologist and previous coordinator of the foundation, has not been seen since August 12, after he had left the company of a delegation of human rights activists visiting Haiti. The car he was driving was found abandoned near the neighborhood, Delmas 18. Days before his abduction, Pierre-Antoine had announced his intention to stand as senator in the elections initially scheduled for December 2007 with the Fanmi Lavalas Party.

Amnesty International fears that Pierre-Antoine may have been abducted by individuals connected with the former military because of his continued activism in denouncing past human rights violations during the 1991-1994 military government and in gathering signatures to amend the Constitution in order to eliminate all provisions for the existence of a Haitian army.

Pierre-Antoine's abduction was reportedly made to look like a kidnapping for ransom. His family was contacted by his alleged abductors on August 14 and asked to pay a ransom. However there has been no further contact from the abductors.

During the last presidency of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Pierre-Antoine was appointed General Coordinator of the National Office on Migration. He left Haiti into exile during the transitional government and returned in February 2006.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The September 30th Foundation (Fondasyon Trant Septan) is named after the date of the military coup in 1991 during which President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted. At least 3,000 individuals were killed during the military regime between 1991-1994. Since 1996, Fondasyon members have marched weekly in central Port-au-Prince and several other Haitian towns to press for an end to impunity for past abuses and reparation for victims of the 1991-1994 military coup and for the victims of the transitional government of 2004-2006. The group also campaigns for the total abolition of the Haitian army through constitutional reform and has gathered signatures toward this goal.

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