



Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Bureau des Avocats Internationaux

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CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW

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International Human Rights Hearing on Rape Epidemic in Haiti

Wednesday, March 23—New York, NY—This Friday, petitioners MADRE, the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), CUNY School of Law and Women's Link Worldwide will testify before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington, DC on the crisis of sexual violence in Haiti.

In October, the aforementioned group of advocates and attorneys submitted a legal petition to the IACHR, calling for immediate action to address the epidemic of rape in Haiti's displacement camps. In response, the IACHR issued a call for urgent "precautionary measures" to protect women and girls in the camps. As an IACHR member state, the Haitian government is legally obligated to uphold this ruling. These measures include the installation of lighting, the provision of security and the inclusion of grassroots women's voices in policy-making spaces.

At this Friday's hearing, the petitioners will underscore the constant threat of sexual violence faced by women and girls in Haiti's displacement camps and the need for immediate implementation of the IACHR's recommendations. They will highlight the need for the international community to support the capacity of the Haitian government to meet its human rights obligations. Malya Villard-Appolon, Marie Eramithe Delva and Jocie Philistin, representatives of KOFAVIV, a grassroots Haitian women's organization founded by and for rape survivors, will participate in this hearing.

This hearing is open to the public.

Date of Hearing: Friday, March 25, 2011

Time: 9am-10am

Location: 1889 F Street NW, Washington, DC, Rubén Darío Room (8th floor, GSB)

Malya Appolon-Villard, co-founder of KOFAVIV, said, "Every day, we see women and girls who have been raped. They have no protection in the camps, and their attackers go unpunished. The IACHR's binding decision for the Haitian government is a first step, and we are ready to work with the IACHR and all of our international partners to ensure that the Haitian government fulfills these demands."

Lisa Davis, MADRE Human Rights Advocacy Director and Adjunct Professor of Law for the International Women's Human Rights Clinic at CUNY Law School, said, “The situation for women and girls living in displacement camps remains dire. The IACHR decision was triggered by the demands of grassroots Haitian women, and now the international community must commit to support the Haitian government in its implementation.”

Annie Gell, Coordinator of the Rape Accountability and Prevention Project (RAPP) at the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, applauded the IACHR for its decisive precautionary measures. “The BAI and its US-affiliate, IJDH, now call on the Haitian government and international community to fully commit to increased cooperation with and support of grassroots Haitian groups and their allies. This must include support for domestic prosecutions of rapists through initiatives in Haiti like the BAI's RAPP initiative. Together, we can end this nightmare.”

Katherine Romero, Staff Attorney for Women’s Link Worldwide, said, “The Inter-American Commission is setting a global precedent by ensuring the rights of victims of sexual violence in contexts of natural disaster and humanitarian emergencies are being duly protected. We expect the rest of the international community to join in.”

To read the legal petition submitted to the IACHR in full, click [here](#).

Immediately after the hearing, the following people will be available for comment:

Malya Appolon-Villard, Marie Eramithe Delva and Jocie Philistin, KOFAVIV
Representatives

Lisa Davis, Esq., MADRE Human Rights Advocacy Director and Adjunct Professor of Law for the International Women's Human Rights Clinic at CUNY Law School

Annie Gell, Esq., the BAI's Coordinator of the Rape Accountability and Prevention Project (RAPP) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Contact: annie@ijdh.org

Katherine Romero, Staff Attorney, Women’s Link Worldwide

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