

INTERVENTION OF KATHERINE ROMERO

Delivered to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

During a Hearing on Precautionary Measure 340-10
Women and Girls in Camps for Forcibly Displaced Persons in Haiti

March 25, 2011

My name is Katherine Romero. I am an attorney with Womens Link Worldwide and would emphasize the following for the Honorable Commission:

Given the unique situation that crosses the political structure of the state and the humanitarian crisis facing the country, we respectfully submit that it is necessary for the Commission to take an active stance to the maximum of its abilities and powers as it has demonstrated on several occasions through its historic career.

In this regard, petitioners consider it of vital importance that the Commission:

1. Conduct a site visit, and that this visit incorporate the coordinated participation of independent experts in the areas of security, justice and health (with emphasis on sexual and reproductive health). As such, the Commission can identify firsthand the risk factors faced by the petitioners, and in that sense to nurture and monitor from different perspectives for future action.
2. Given the magnitude of the violations, we request that the Committee urge the State and coordinate closely with United Nations agencies the highest possible level of participation by the petitioners in the execution and implementation of the precautionary measures. To this end, we request an order that future meetings between United Nations agencies, state officials and local groups are conducted in Haitian Creole, or at least with translation from French to Creole and vice versa to ensure the effective participation of petitioners in all future activities. Likewise, adopting a work schedule that prioritizes resolving security, overcrowding and health, which must be presented to this Commission as soon as possible to revise the assurances of participation and continuity into the future.
3. The severity of the barriers to access to justice warrant ordering the State to set a path for the reporting and investigation between the police, the justice sector, public and private providers of health, and women to act in concert to avoid procedures that create disproportionate burdens, provide timely and necessary medical certificates and avoid revictimizing women and girls in health and justice systems.
4. With respect to security, it is requested that the Commission order the State, as a matter of urgent priority, to increase the number and frequency of patrols inside the camps and conduct, in the medium term, gender sensitivity training for agents of the police and justice sector.