



*Organización No Gubernamental con estatuto consultivo ante el ECOSOC y
representación permanente ante la ONU de Nueva York y Ginebra*

**Declaration of the Asociación Americana de Juristas (American Association of Jurists-AAJ)
expressing concern over recent threats, harassment and intimidation against attorneys in
Haiti**

The American Association of Jurists (AAJ), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations, expresses its deep concern over the recent intimidation of Haitian attorneys who represent government critics, victims of human rights violations, and displaced persons, which has included continuous death threats, judicial harassment, and a report that Haiti's top justice official ordered the arrest of three attorneys.

The arrest orders came to light last week when Jean-Renel Senatus, the former chief prosecutor of Port-au-Prince, reported that he was fired by Minister of Justice Jean-Renel Sanon for refusing to illegally arrest 36 political opponents. Among those targeted were lawyers Newton St. Juste, Andre Michel, who have filed corruption claims against the family of President Michel Martelly, and Mario Joseph, a prominent human rights lawyer.

AAJ is particularly affected by the attacks against Mr. Joseph, who is managing attorney of the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), Haiti's largest public interest law firm, which has represented many victims of state repression for decades. Mr. Joseph is also a member of AAJ, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, and is a regular speaker at National Lawyers Guild conferences and seminars. He has also participated in the UN Human Rights Council's evaluation of Haiti's human rights record under the Universal Period Review (UPR) procedure. Most recently, on September 20, 2012, Mr. Joseph participated in a panel discussion at the Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Forum in Washington DC, in which he provided a critique of the Martelly Administration's human rights record.

Over the past few months, Mr. Joseph and the BAI have come under increasing pressure from the Haitian government in the form of police surveillance, threats broadcasts on the radio, and an unjustified summons to a court hearing. Mr. Joseph has also received multiple anonymous telephone death threats and the BAI office walls have been painted with hostile graffiti.

The independence of lawyers is a prerequisite to democracy and human rights and is a cornerstone for the rule of law. Therefore, AAJ:

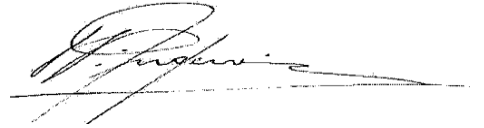
- 1) Urges the Haitian government to respect the independence of lawyers and to immediately cease harassment against them; ensure that any acts of intimidation of

lawyers are duly and independently investigated; and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

October 9, 2012



Vanessa Ramos
President
(VRamos1565@aol.com)



Hernán Rivadeneira J.
Secretary General
(hr21908@gmail.com)