



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Human Rights Lawyers Urge International Human Rights Commission to Denounce Pattern of Threats and Intimidation against Lawyers in Haiti**

(WASHINGTON D.C., November 4, 2013) — The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL), *Bureau des Avocats Internationaux* (BAI) and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) met with representatives from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) today to ask them to denounce an escalating pattern of threats and intimidation against lawyers and judges in Haiti.

The lawyers briefed the Commission on death threats, police surveillance and false criminal charges mounted against lawyers and judges who challenge government corruption and impunity through the court system. The urgent meeting followed the illegal arrest last week of Haitian lawyer André Michel, who is protected under precautionary measures granted by the Commission last year due to security and arrest threats he received after he filed a corruption case against President Michel Martelly's wife and son. Haiti's lawyers have been on strike since last week to protest the Executive Branch's politicization of the justice system.

“The situation of the judiciary and lawyers in Haiti is unprecedented, the Haitian Government seems determined to reinstate dictatorship and suppress all basic human rights for the people and the institutions to uphold them. Life seems to be worthless now in Haiti and everybody's safety is at great peril” according to human rights lawyer Luis Roberto Zamora Bolaños, attorney from IADL.

Other victims of attacks include attorney Patrice Florvilus, who [requested protection from the IACHR](#) last month for threats and a criminal summons for crimes he did not commit in retaliation for his legal representation of police brutality victims. In July 2013, [Judge Jean Serge Joseph](#), who presided over the corruption case filed by Attorney Michel against the President's family, died under suspicious circumstances two days after he reported being threatened by top officials, including President Michel Martelly. Last October, the IACHR awarded [precautionary measures](#) “to guarantee the life and physical integrity” of Attorney Mario Joseph from the BAI in response to a report by a former prosecutor that current Minister of Justice Jean Renel Sanon ordered his unlawful arrest and the closure of the BAI.

The meeting today with representatives from the Commission went “very well,” according to Nicole Phillips, Esq. “Everyone at the table was deeply concerned about the threats against lawyers in Haiti. We must all work together to hold the government accountable for these threats and for using the justice system for its own political purposes.”