

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDER THREATENED WITH DEATH

Sanièce Petit Phat, a Haitian women and girls' rights defender, has reported receiving death threats because of her work on behalf of victims of domestic and sexual violence in the community of Canaan, Haiti.

Sanièce Petit Phat is the coordinator of the women's rights organization Mouvman Fanm Lakay an Aksyon (Women's Movement in Action, MOFALAK), which operates in the Canaan area on the northern outskirts of Port-au-Prince, a vast land transformed into a new urban settlement following the 2010 earthquake that devastated most of the Haitian capital. The organization is known for denouncing violence against women and girls.

In July 2016, Sanièce Petit Phat reported becoming the target of intimidation, including by receiving death threats against her and her family (in particular threatening to kill her two young children), from a neighbour. He is accused of acts of domestic violence against his wife and feared that MOFALAK could report his actions to the authorities. Sanièce Petit Phat told Amnesty International that the man felt threatened by the organization's work in the area.

On 11 October 2017, the neighbour attacked Raymond Charité, Sanièce Petit Phat's nephew who also lives with her, with a sharp object at Raymond Charité's workplace. He was later brought to a hospital to receive treatment for wounds sustained from the attack. Raymond Charité reported that his attacker said he would continue to act violently until Sanièce Petit Phat and her family leave the area.

Sanièce Petit Phat lodged a complaint against the neighbour for the attack on her nephew and he was later arrested by the police on 17 October. However, on 26 October the Public Prosecutor's Office in Croix-des-Bouquets released him. The reasons for the release are unclear and Sanièce Petit Phat fears for her life and the life of her family, leading her to stay hidden all day and moving houses by night.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to provide immediate protection to Sanièce Petit Phat and other members of MOFALAK, in consultation with them and in accordance with their wishes;
- Demanding thorough and impartial investigations into the attack against Raymond Charité, the acts of intimidation and death threats received by Sanièce Petit Phat, and the accusation of domestic violence, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- Demanding further security measures to be put in place in the Canaan area, in particular for groups and individuals most at risk like women and girls;
- Calling on them to publicly recognize the legitimate work that human rights defenders do, and in particular the right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 JANUARY 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice and Public Security
Maître Heidi Fortuné
Ministre de la Justice et de la Sécurité
Publique
18, Avenue Charles Summer
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
Email: secretariat.mjsp@yahoo.com
**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Monsieur le
Ministre**

General Director of National Police
Michel-Ange Gédeon
Directeur Général de la PNH
Police Nationale d'Haïti
20, Angle des rues Darguin et Gregoire
Pétion-Ville, Ouest, Haïti
Email: policenationalehaiti@gmail.com
Twitter: @DG_PNH
**Salutation: Dear Director General/
Monsieur le Directeur Général**

And copies to:
First Lady of Haiti
Madame Martine Moïse
Email: martine@jovenelmoise.ht
Twitter: @martinejmoise

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Embassy of the Republic of Haiti, 14 Cavendish Place London W1G 9DJ, 0207 637 8985, Fax 0207 637 8980, Email: info@haitianembassy.org.uk
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sexual violence and violence against women and girls continues to be alarming and underreported in Haiti. In most cases, survivors face entrenched impunity within the criminal justice system. MOFALAK provides support to women and girls who are survivors of multiple forms of violence, including “physical, psychological, verbal and economic violence.” They often publicly denounce these situations in local media and to authorities. The organization also carries out awareness raising projects on women’s rights and works to increase political and economic participation of women and girls in Haitian society.

In April 2017, the government tabled in Parliament a comprehensive reform of the Criminal Code, with new provisions to better tackle sexual violence, which included making rape within marriage a criminal offence.

Earlier this year, NGO Doctors Without Borders found that 77% of the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence that had been treated between May 2015 and March 2017 in its specialized clinic in Port-au-Prince were women and girls under the age of 25. Furthermore, 53% were under the age of 18, highlighting the extreme vulnerability of girls and young women.

The work of human rights defenders remains difficult in Haiti. In recent years, Amnesty International has recorded numerous instances of attacks, threats and harassment against human rights defenders, including lawyers, which often seemed to be related to their human rights work. In most cases, the authorities have failed to carry out prompt and thorough investigations. Moreover, the authorities have not put in place effective protection measures to enable the defenders to carry out their work without fear of reprisals, in violation of multiple orders from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).

In March 2017 the organization issued an Urgent Action on behalf of human rights defenders David Boniface and Juders Ysemé after they reported fearing for their lives following the sudden death of their colleague, Nissage Martyr. The men reported repeated death threats and attacks by the former mayor of the Haitian town of Les Irois since 2007, but the authorities did not implement adequate protection measures, and despite the fact that the IACHR had granted them precautionary measures in 2015. By the time of writing, Amnesty International is not aware of any specific steps taken by the Haitian authorities in relation to this action (for more information, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/6045/2017/en/>).

In 2007, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on behalf of Sanièce Petit Phat (see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/005/2007/en/>) when she received death threats in relation with her work to accompany a rape survivor in Savanette, near the border with the Dominican Republic.