



human rights *first*

THE NEW NAME OF

LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue
c/o Raymond Joseph, Chargé d'Affaires
Embassy of the Republic of Haiti
2311 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

October 14, 2004

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am writing to express our grave concern about the safety of Catholic pastor and prominent Haitian rights activist Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste, who was arrested on October 13, 2004, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti and is currently in the custody of the Haitian government. Human Rights First urges you to ensure that Reverend Gerard Jean-Juste is provided the due process and humane treatment which are his right under Haitian and international law.

According to initial information we have received, on Wednesday afternoon masked members of the Haitian National Police entered Sainte Claire Church where Rev. Jean-Juste was running a weekly soup kitchen for his parishioners in Port-au-Prince. The men arrested Rev. Jean-Juste and took him to the police station in Petionville. According to our reports, the police did not have a warrant, and Rev. Jean-Juste has yet to be charged with any crime.

Human Rights First has worked closely with Rev. Jean-Juste, who founded the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami, Florida. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Rev. Jean-Juste was a prominent and respected voice in the United States on behalf of the rights of Haitians. We strongly urge that Rev. Jean-Juste be treated humanely by Haitian authorities. He should not be held without formal charges. If the government of Haiti does not have sufficient evidence to prosecute him in a court of law, then he should be immediately released.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Michael Posner
Executive Director

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