

## **HAITI ACTION ALERT**

April 21, 2005

### **HAITIAN GRASSROOTS WOMAN ACTIVIST & LABOR LEADERS ARRESTED, HARASSED BY POLICE**

The situation in Haiti continues to be critical. Since the US backed coup of February 29, 2004 followed by the occupation of Haiti first by US Marines and then by UN forces, approximately 10,000 Haitians have been killed and over one thousand jailed. Grassroots leaders and other supporters of President Aristide are under constant threat. Your help is urgently needed to oppose the most recent arrest and harassment of grassroots labor leaders, an attack clearly aimed at undermining and silencing grassroots resistance to the occupation, attempting to halt the right to travel outside of Haiti, as well as stifling international solidarity. This harassment violates the protections of the right to organize workers contained in the Haitian Constitution and numerous international instruments to which Haiti is a party. Lives are at risk. Please circulate this email widely, and see the action suggestions below for other things you can do.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Ginette Apollon, President of the National Commission of Women Workers (CNFT) was illegally arrested on April 19, 2005 at the Port-au-Prince International Airport upon her return from the Encuentro Mundial de Solidaridad Con la Revolucion Bolivariana in Venezuela. The Encuentro marked the third anniversary of the reversal of the coup against President Chavez. Ms. Apollon, a member of the Confederation des Travailleurs Haotiens (CTH), a mother and an activist working with grassroots women, was invited to Venezuela by INAMUJER, a Venezuelan women's rights organization. While there she met with Central Latino-Americana de los Trabajadores (CLAT) with whom CTH is affiliated. Apollon was questioned by police about her trip to Venezuela, the purpose of her trip, who she met with and more.

Also illegally arrested at the airport were Paul Loulou Chiry, a prominent labor leader who is General Coordinator of the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) along with his brother, Lamour Chiry; both were at the airport to greet Ms Apollon. The police illegally interrogated them all about their work as labor leaders, and about their work supporting the return of democracy to Haiti. Authorities confiscated the cell phones of the arrestees, videos belonging to Apollon, and the lap top computer of Chiry.

The police accused Apollon of receiving money abroad to finance violence in Haiti; after demanding her banking information, \$23 in US currency and 350 gourdes in Haitian currency (less than \$10 US) that police discovered after a meticulous search. The activists were released after several hours, but had to agree to be interrogated again the following day. Ginette Apollon, who suffers from high blood pressure, had to be hospitalized during the ordeal. Apollon and Chiry are mandated to return again to the police station on Friday, April 21.

Both Apollon and Chiry are prominent critics of Haiti's interim regime, which was imposed by the U.S. and France and dominated by Haitian elites. The interim regime has raided union offices and arrested activists who are supporters of President Aristide without a warrant, and on the basis of vague charges.

What you can do: Urgently contact the following and urge them to do everything in their power to immediately stop the harassment of Ginette Apollon and Paul Loulou Chiry:

HAITIAN INTERIM PRIME Minister Gerard Latortue, fax 011-509-249 5561 [primaturehaiti@hotmail.com](mailto:primaturehaiti@hotmail.com);

US AMBASSADOR TO HAITI, James B. Foley, Fax 011-509-223 9038 or 011-509-223-1641;

HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER Dana Banks, [BanksD@state.gov](mailto:BanksD@state.gov); EMBASSY OF BRAZIL IN HAITI : Fax 011-509-256-0990 L [brasemb1@transnethaiti.com](mailto:brasemb1@transnethaiti.com) or [brasemb2@transnethaiti.com](mailto:brasemb2@transnethaiti.com); UNITED NATIONS STABILIZATION MISSION TO HAITI : Mahamane Cisse-Gouro, Human Rights Director, 011-509-403-4012 or 011-509-527-5274, [cisse-gouro@un.org](mailto:cisse-gouro@un.org)

Please add your name to this action alert (see form below) Email this action alert to all on your email lists and ask them to send it to their email lists Post this action alert on your web site Send a donation

Time is of the essence if we do not immediately demonstrate international rejection of the persecution of these labor leaders/grassroots activists, the interim Haitian government will go further. For Ginette Apollon, already in poor health, continued harassment could be a death sentence.

Original signers to this action alert include:

Haiti Action Committee;  
Fondation 30 Septembre;  
Haitian Initiative For Democracy;  
Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network;  
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti;  
Haiti Progress;  
Haiti Support Network;  
The Global Women's Strike;  
Clement Payne Society/Barbados;  
Red Thread/Guyana;  
Danny Glover;  
Selma James;  
Margaret Prescod;  
Steve Gillis President, USWA Local 8751 Boston School Bus Drivers' Union;  
Kevin Skerrett, Senior Research Officer, Canadian Union of Public Employees;  
Ray Laforest, staff organizer DC 1707 AFFCME;  
Walter Riley, Attorney-at-Law;  
Barbara Rhine, Attorney-at-Law;  
Dave Welsh, Delegate, San Francisco Labor Council;  
Maureen Duignan, O.S.F.;  
Dale Sorensen, Director, Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas;  
Claude Marks, Freedom Archives;  
Jeff Ballinger, Executive Director, Press for Change;  
Sylvia Tiwon, University of California, Berkeley;  
Merlin Chowkwanyun, Columbia University;  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - DC Branch;  
Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean;  
Sasha B. Kramer, Stanford University;

Yes, I support this action alert: NAME: -----

ORGANIZATION-----

EMAIL----- TELEPHONE/FAX (     )-----

Mailing address (optional) -----

Please keep me up to date on the developing situation in Haiti.

Please do not hit the reply button to respond to this email, instead, please send on your endorsement an/or questions by email [jk4haiti@aol.com](mailto:jk4haiti@aol.com) or phone (510)483-7481

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Suggestion for a fax or email to the above listed parties:

Date

I/We are writing to protest the illegal arrest and forced interrogation of Ginette Apollon, President of the National Commission of Women Workers (CNFT) and a grassroots women's rights activist, Paul Loulou Chery, General Coordinator of the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) and Mr. Chery, (Loulou's brother). They were arrested on Tuesday, March 19 at the airport as Apollon was returning from an Encuentro she attended in Venezuela at the invitation of INAMUJER a Venezuelan Women's Rights Organization. The police interrogated the arrestees about their solidarity work for several hours on Tuesday and again on Wednesday, and confiscated their telephones, a laptop computer and some videos; they questioned Apollon about who she met with in Venezuela and what she did there. Apollon, who suffers from high blood pressure, had to be hospitalized during the ordeal. The interrogation is scheduled to resume on Friday, April 21.

The arrests and interrogation can be seen as nothing more than an attempt to silence grassroots and labor union organizing, to undermine the right to travel outside of Haiti, and to stifle international solidarity. This harassment violates the protections of the right to organize workers contained in the Haitian Constitution and numerous international instruments to which Haiti is a party. There is growing concern around the world about this situation.

We ask that you assure that the interrogation of Apollon, Chery and his brother and all other harassment end immediately, and that grassroots Haitians be allowed to exercise their right to organize, protest and travel without interference from police and/or other authorities.

Sincerely,