

URGENT ACTION

LGBTI ORGANIZATION'S OFFICE ATTACKED IN HAITI

The office of Haitian LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) rights organization Kouraj was attacked by armed men who assaulted two members of the organization, ransacked the premises and stole sensitive personal information. Kouraj activists are also receiving homophobic telephone threats since then.

The office of **Kouraj**, a Haitian organization which raises awareness about LGBTI rights and creates public debate about the stigma surrounding same-sex relationships in Haiti was attacked by armed men on 21 November. At around 1pm, three men armed with machetes and handguns forced their way into Kouraj's office based in Port-au-Prince. They said that that office must not operate here and made homophobic insults against the two members of Kouraj who were in the office at the time, whom they then beat and tied up. The attackers then proceeded to ransack the office and stole office equipment including two laptops and personal belongings. Kouraj staff are concerned that these men also took files containing contact information of the organization's members, including personal addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers. It is not clear how many files were stolen and therefore how many members could be at risk of further attacks.

A few days before the attack, Kouraj activists heard people making threats outside the office, saying that the office was an office of homosexuals, and that they would attack them soon. Since the attack, Kouraj activists have received several anonymous calls with homophobic insults and threats of further attacks. Kouraj's office has been closed since the attack occurred. A justice of the peace (*juge de paix*) has been to the office to make a report on the incident and Kouraj have reported it to the police.

The profile of Kouraj's activism on behalf of LGBTI people was raised in July and August following marches against same-sex relationships and the surrounding debate about homosexuality in Haiti. Kouraj activists also received numerous threats following these marches.

Please write immediately in French, Haitian Creole or your own language:

- Calling for an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack on Kouraj's office and assault of its members, as well as into the telephone threats received, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate steps to provide full protection to Kouraj activists in accordance with their wishes and protection to all those whose details may have been leaked and are at risk of attack;
- Asking the authorities to publicly acknowledge the legitimacy and relevance of human rights defenders, including LGBTI rights defenders, who have the right to carry out their activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JANUARY 2014 TO:

General Director of the Haitian Police

Godson Orélus
Directeur Général de la PNH
Police Nationale d'Haiti
Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Email: godore68@hotmail.com

**Salutation: Monsieur le directeur/
Dear Director**

Minister of Justice and Public Security

Jean Renel Sanon
18, avenue Charles Summer
Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Email: secretariat.mjsp@yahoo.com

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/ Dear
Minister**

And solidarity copies to:

Kouraj
Email: info@kouraj.org
Twitter: @KOURAJayiti

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kouraj (Haitian Creole for "courage") formed in 2009 as "Amis-Amis" (Friends-Friends) and became Kouraj in December 2011. They are activists "working for the promotion of the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people" in Haiti (known in Haitian Creole as persons M for *Masisi*, *Madivin*, *Makomer* or *Mix*) and aim to raise public awareness of the situation of discrimination and stigma towards their community.

During the summer, various demonstrations were held in Port-au-Prince and others parts of the country against same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage in Haiti, which resulted in threats against LGBTI rights defenders, and attacks and harassment against LGBTI people or those perceived as LGBTI. For example, Kouraj activists, and especially their president, received threats after a first demonstration against homosexuality was called by religious leaders (see UA AMR 36/014/2013: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR36/014/2013/en>). They received threats via phone, Facebook, and at their office. Following these threats they relocated their office to the venue that has now been attacked.

Kouraj activists have told Amnesty International how the situation of LGBTI people has worsened since the 12 January 2010 earthquake, especially with the substantial arrival of religious groups from North America, many of whom have accused "homosexuality in Haiti" to be one of the reasons for the earthquake and the source of the country's problems.

Name: Activists from Kouraj

Gender m/f: both

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