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CONGRESSMAN KENDRICK B. MEEK

October 20, 2004

Ambassador James Foley
U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince
Boulevard Harry Truman no. 5
Bicentenaire – Port-au-Prince, Haiti
011-509-223-9038 FAX

Dear Ambassador Foley:

I write today to request that you make official representations to Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue to determine the exact nature of the charges against Father Gerard Jean-Juste and that you visit him in prison to ensure that the Haitian government safeguards his human and legal rights.

Father Jean-Juste is currently jailed by the Haitian government under Prime Minister Latortue. I am particularly concerned about the possibility of a lengthy or indeterminate imprisonment under harsh jail conditions because from what I understand, the Haitian government has not indicated what it intends to do with Father Jean-Juste.

Father Jean-Juste was arrested under highly unusual circumstances by police officers and masked men at his Port-au-Prince church last Wednesday. According to reports, although Father Jean-Juste demanded to see an arrest warrant, the armed officers and men refused. Pursuant to these same accounts, Haitian police smashed some of the rectory windows during the arrest. They then reportedly dragged Father Jean-Juste through the window over the broken glass, rather than walking him out the door.

Armed gangs now reportedly roam Port-au-Prince and other major Haitian cities. The Haitian government has been ineffective in restoring or maintaining order or in addressing the rapidly deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in the country. In addition, the administration of justice in Haiti is deeply flawed and highly suspect. For example, a recent trial described by the Washington Post as "farcical," conducted mostly after midnight and concluded before dawn, acquitted Louis Jodel Chamblain of the 1993 murder Antoine Izmyery, a prominent pro-democracy activist and businessman. It would be a travesty if Father Jean-Juste were treated this way, or if harm should come his way while detained by the Haitian government.

Under these circumstances, I am concerned that Father Jean-Juste might not be detained inhumanely and that he might not be afforded representation or Constitutional and legal rights and timely judicial proceedings.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your prompt response to this urgent matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kendrick B. Meek".

KENDRICK B. MEEK
Member of Congress