



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 9, 2005

The Honorable Gérard Latortue, Prime Minister  
The Republic of Haïti  
Minister Villa D'Accueil Bourdon  
Port-au-Prince, Haïti, W.I.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

We write to urge the immediate release of the Reverend Gérard Jean-Juste and other prisoners of conscience incarcerated by your government.

Their confinement comes in stark contrast to the Ministry of Justice's recent decision to release one of Haiti's most notorious paramilitary leaders from the 1991 coup d'état, Louis-Jodel Chamblain.

The Haitian Judiciary reportedly has yet to arraign Father Jean-Juste, although Haitian law requires that charges be filed within 48 hours of an initial arrest. This matter is now of even more immediate concern because news agencies have reported that Father Jean-Juste collapsed in his prison cell at the National Penitentiary, and that he fell unconscious for nearly twenty minutes. His lawyer has said that Father Jean-Juste is in poor health, citing his loss of more than fifteen pounds in less than a month.

Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was also imprisoned unlawfully for more than ten months before his arraignment. He is currently still in prison, jailed now for more than a year and apparently without any prospect of a timely hearing. Reports that the government has presented no significant evidence in his case only support the claim that Neptune is being held without justification. Indeed, in an interview last month, Justice Minister Henri Dorlean conceded that almost all of the National Penitentiary's 1,300 inmates are currently imprisoned without charge and without trial.

Mr. Prime Minister, in the eyes of the international community, the continued illegal detention of Haitian citizens dilutes the legitimacy of governmental authority. We urge you take the necessary steps to discharge Reverend Jean-Juste, former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and other Haitian citizens who are currently entitled to release under Haitian law.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kendall B. Meek

Jim McDevitt

Sam Lam

Devin J. Kovach

Danny K. Davis

Gregory W. Meeks

Tim Ryan

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Albert R. Uff

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