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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN HAITI

ISSUE

The human rights situation in Haiti, of long time concern to Canada, has deteriorated significantly since the September 1991 ouster of the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Resolution 1992/77 of CHR 48 and ECOSOC decision 1992/245 saw the nomination of a Special Rapporteur to examine the human rights situation in Haiti. The interim report of the Rapporteur was presented to the 47th UNGA on November 6; the final report will be presented to the 49th UNCHR this spring.

The General Assembly also passed a resolution on the Situation of Democracy and Human Rights in Haiti which, in part, expressed alarm at the worsening of the violations of human rights and took note of the OAS resolution of October 29 on cooperation between the OAS and UN on the issue.

The OAS has an observer mission in place in Haiti in order to monitor the situation and work towards the restoration of democracy.

BACKGROUND

A wide range of human rights violations have been reported and documented in Haiti over the past year. The Special Rapporteur reported that harassment, intimidation, attacks, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial executions and torture by members of the military and civilians working with them are prevalent. In addition, freedom of opinion and expression, assembly and association have been suspended.

The economic and social life of the population in general has been severely interrupted as a result. Individuals are routinely forced to bribe military and civilian officials in order to avoid further beatings or arrests or to obtain their release from detention. In the process, many individuals and families have been forced to sell off their possessions to raise the money demanded. Many others have been forced into hiding in order to avoid further persecution at the hands of the de facto government and its agents. They are forced to separate from their families and friends or risk exposing others to the same danger they face.

The practice of "preventive repression" is also of concern. The poor and rural populations have been specifically targeted for abuse as it is from these groups that President Aristide derives the majority of his support. Individuals in these areas are apparently selected