



For Immediate Release
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With Haiti falling into lawlessness and insurrection, Haitian women and girls face escalating violence and danger from the very institutions meant to protect them. Dwa Fanm, a Haitian women's human rights organization based in New York, joins with women's organizations in Haiti, including the National Women's Rights Advocacy Coordination (CONAP), Kay Fanm, Enfofanm, SOFA, and Fanm Yo La to mobilize against these increased human rights violations.

Dwa Fanm is greatly alarmed by the deterioration in the conditions of women's lives and the growing intolerance and political violence that is affecting the Haitian population, particularly women. A turning point for many women activists was an attack by alleged government supporters on a sit-in at the Ministry of Justice on October 29, 2003 to protest violence against women and denounce the murder of Danielle Lustin, a prominent women's activist. The government did not condemn the acts perpetrated against women, nor has it taken any steps to prosecute those responsible for the violence.

There is a real danger that women will suffer disproportionately in the growing political violence whether through repression of their public activism or by a related increase in domestic violence. Dwa Fanm is concerned about a rise in reported rapes, including politically motivated rapes. Women's organizations in Haiti describe six such rapes in December 2003, including four in the town of Petit Goave, one in a Port-au-Prince maternity hospital, and the rape of a member of the women's documentation center Enfofanm. In addition, in mid-January, Dwa Fanm received alarming reports of intimidation and threats against leading feminists and women activists.

Of serious concern to Dwa Fanm is increasing denial of due process, police brutality and arbitrary justice. Dwa Fanm urges all parties to take steps to reverse the breakdown of the rule of law and to respect human rights. As Haiti celebrates its Bicentennial, the organization salutes the accomplishments of Haitian women throughout history, and demands that their rights and dignity be respected.

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