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**HASTINGS HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT  
FOR HAITI**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friday, April 20, 2007**

**ALL CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST FORMER HAITIAN PRIME MINISTER  
TWO YEARS AFTER LAW STUDENTS AND ATTORNEYS LODGE COMPLAINT  
WITH INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION**

*Many political prisoners continue to suffer in dismal prison conditions.*

*San Francisco, CA: April 20, 2007.* After years of illegal imprisonment and unsubstantiated charges, former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune is a free man. A Haitian appeals court has ruled that all charges against him must be dropped, due to the unconstitutional manner in which they were filed. Charges against former Minister of the Interior Jocelerme Privert were also dropped.

“While Neptune is free, many others are not,” stated University of California Hastings law student Jens Iverson. “Neptune’s release is a case study in how international pressure and attention can help those caught in a dysfunctional justice system, where many prisoners are simply forgotten and left to rot.” U.C. Hastings Professor Naomi Roht-Arriaza stated that “the partnership between renowned Haitian attorneys such as Mario Joseph, human rights experts and willing law students has proven to be truly effective. But much remains to be done.”

On April 20, 2005, law students at the University of California, Hastings, along with Haitian and U.S. attorneys filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on behalf of Neptune. Neptune had been illegally imprisoned since June 2004. The law students’ petition requested immediate action on the part of the Commission to prevent further endangerment of Mr. Neptune’s life. In addition to calling for the former Prime Minister’s immediate release from arbitrary detention, the petition asked for international oversight and supervision of Haitian prisons in order to improve their dismal conditions.

Mr. Neptune’s continued detention placed his life in substantial danger. He survived at least two assassination attempts, as well as a prison massacre and a prison breakout since his arrest. While the Yvon Neptune was eventually released from prison due to the worldwide outcry at his illegal imprisonment, charges remained lodged against him.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR) decided in November 2005 to declare the present case for Yvon Neptune admissible with respect to Articles 5, 7, 8, and 25.1 of the American Convention and to proceed with the examination of the merits of the case.

In November 2006, at the request of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR), the Bureau des Advocats Internationaux, the Institute for Justice for Democracy in Haiti, and the Hastings Human Rights Project for Haiti, submitted their support for referral of the case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

“The Appeals Court victory is not the victory that Mr. Neptune and his co-defendants deserve, and the prosecutor had recommended, because it does not recognize the absence of evidence against them,” explains Brian Concannon of the Institute of Justice and Democracy in

Haiti, a co-filer of the complaint before the Inter-American Commission that brought Neptune's plight to worldwide attention. "But it is a victory, because it ends almost three years of legal struggle, including over two dangerous years in prison for Mr. Neptune and Mr. Privert. Credit is due Mario Joseph and his legal team at the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, but the lawyers never would have had their day in court without the persistent pressure applied from outside Haiti."

The IACHR is conducting an on-site visit to Haiti from April 16-20, 2007 to observe the human rights situation. The IACHR is charged by the Organization of American States (OAS) to examine and report on human rights in the western hemisphere. The Commission investigates claims of human rights violations, makes recommendations to governments, and refers cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The Commission investigated the violations of Neptune's rights and referred the case to the Court. That case will remain active due to the suffering Neptune endured and the overriding concerns regarding Haiti's defective justice system.

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**For additional information or a copy of the petition, please visit [IJDH.org](http://IJDH.org), [HastingsHumanRights.org](http://HastingsHumanRights.org) or contact:**

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**Notes to the editor:**

The original petition was filed by the Hastings Human Rights Project for Haiti (HHRPH) in conjunction with attorneys from the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) and Bureau des Avocats Internationaux. (BAI).

**Hastings Human Rights Project for Haiti (HHRPH)** was created in 2004 by students and faculty at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law to provide students with practical experience in human rights litigation. First, second, and third year law students work with human rights attorneys and Hastings faculty advisors to bring human rights cases before international courts. It is currently producing a report on MINUSTAH, the peacekeeping force in Haiti.

**The Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)** works with the people of Haiti in their non-violent struggle for the return and consolidation of constitutional democracy, justice and human rights, by distributing objective information on human rights conditions in Haiti, pursuing legal cases, and cooperating with human rights and solidarity groups in Haiti and abroad.

**The Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI)** represents victims of human rights violations in Haitian courts. The BAI's most successful case to date is the 2002 trial of the Raboteau massacre, which led to the convictions of fifty-three men, including the top military and paramilitary leaders of the 1991-1994 dictatorship. BAI was founded in 1995 and has its main office in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.