

# MINNESOTA ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## *Another Violence Against Women: The Lack of Accountability in Haiti*

### **Executive Summary**

One year after the return of democratically-elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti, victims of human rights violations during the period of military rule from 1991 to 1994 face the difficult task of seeking accountability and justice for these violations. Although the Haitian government has established or tried to establish several mechanisms to assist victims, very few perpetrators have been brought to justice. Women face particular burdens in seeking justice in Haiti; current laws and legal practice provide little recourse to women who have been victims of rape or other violence.

The military government's widespread and systematic use of rape and other violence against women as tools of repression has been extensively documented by both Haitian and international human rights monitors. This violence has occurred in a context where the consequences of rape are particularly severe: women have limited or no access to medical, social, or psychological assistance. Yet little has been done either to assist the victims or punish the perpetrators.

In February and July 1995, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights sent delegations to Haiti to investigate further the violence against women during the time of military rule and to evaluate the mechanisms which were established by the Haitian government to address these human rights violations. This report is based primarily upon the information gathered during those visits.

\*\*In February 1995, Minnesota Advocates Project Attorney Elizabeth Bruch and volunteer Madeleine Maceno Avignon, a Haitian citizen residing in the United States and a student of public health nursing at the University of Minnesota, spent one week in Port-au-Prince and traveled briefly to the Artibonite. In July, Bruch, Avignon, and volunteer Neil Elliott, a professor at the College of St. Catherine, spent two weeks in Port-au-Prince, Aux Cayes, and Jacmel. The delegates met with women's groups, human rights organizations, governmental representatives, UN/OAS International Civilian Mission staff, representatives of the Commission of Truth and Justice, local women, health care professionals, and other interested individuals.