Haitian human rights defender faces threats

In the last issue of Socialist Lawyer our International Secretary Bill Bowring wrote an article regarding the vital work being conducted by Mario Joseph of the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI). In particular the article focused on the organisation’s work representing cholera victims in their efforts to bring the UN to account for its role in causing the cholera outbreak following the earthquake in 2010. Over the last year Mario has been subjected to various acts of intimidation due to the work that he is undertaking. The last two months has seen the intimidation reach unprecedented levels, with increasingly open displays of Government coercion. This has culminated in the dismissal of the chief prosecutor of Port-au-Prince Jean Renel Senatus, following his refusal to illegally issue arrest warrants against human rights defenders including Mario.

The Haldane Society, along with other organisations including the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, has issued a statement regarding the ongoing intimidation against Mario which we have sent to the following individuals:

- Jean Renel Sanon, Minister of Justice and Public Security Secretariat.mjsp@yahoo.com
- Gerard Norguaisse, Chief Prosecutor of Port-au-Prince parquetpap@yahoo.fr
- Gabriel Knau, Special Rapporteur on the independence of Judges and Lawyers srindependecej@ohchr.org
- Margaret Sekaggya, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders defenders@ohchr.org
- William Hague, UK Foreign Secretary haguem@parliament.uk

The statement can be read on Haldane’s website.

We encourage all our members to write similar letters denouncing the Haitian Government’s role in attempting to quieten Mario.

For an up to date report on the work of Mario and the BAI please visit www.judh.org

Carlos Orjuela

Euro lawyers get organised

On Friday 14th September 2012, the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH) held its Executive Committee meeting. The meeting, which started with an intense political discussion on the crisis of capitalism and the role of lawyers in the working-class movement, was lively and constructive. Participants came from, Spain/ Basque Country, England, Latvia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Germany, France, and Switzerland.

The Executive was presented with a report of successful activities in the past months, including ELDH sponsorship and participation in The Haldane Society’s Defending Human Rights Defenders Conference on 24th February 2012 at Amnesty International UK. ELDH paid for participation from Turkey and from Chechnya.

Future activities include:

- ELDH Training workshop on ‘Trial observation’. This will include training on observation of political trials, role of lawyers as observers, preparation, local activities, risks, statements, reports, contact with local lawyers, contact with judges, prosecutors, politicians & human rights organisations, 27th October 2012, 10h00 – 14h00, Bern, Switzerland;
- ELDH will produce a handbook on trial observation in different countries. All ELDH members and other experts will be involved;
- European Network of Labour Lawyers, next preparatory meeting, 28th September 2012, Paris;
- ELDH conference ‘Migrants – Outlaws Everywhere’, 4th May 2013, in Düsseldorf, Berlin, or Frankfurt;
- ELDH 20th Anniversary, 1st May 2013 (ELDH was founded on 1 May 1993 in Paris);
- Next ELDH General Assembly: 5th May 2013;
- All Haldane members are welcome at ELDH events. Please contact me if you are interested.

Bill Bowring

October

8: A court rules that nine friends and backers of Julian Assange must surrender the bail money they offered to guarantee Assange would abide by bail conditions. The group is thought to have pledged around £140,000. The court said the cash had to be forfeited if the system of sureties was not to be undermined.

16: Theresa May halts the extradition of British computer hacker Gary McKinnon. The US State Department criticised the decision. In a move many immediately seized upon as deeply ironic, May told MPs she had taken the decision on human rights grounds. It is not thought that McKinnon owns a cat however.

19: The Court of Appeal rules that families of two servicemen killed in Iraq and two former soldiers who were badly injured can sue the Ministry of Defence. The court said that alleged negligence in failing to provide proper equipment for troops meant compensation claims could be launched.