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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
October 21, 2005

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**CONGRESSWOMAN WATERS AND 24 OTHER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
ASK PRESIDENT BUSH TO URGE THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT OF HAITI
TO RELEASE FORMER PRIME MINISTER YVON NEPTUNE**

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) sent a letter to President Bush, asking him to urge the interim government of Haiti to release former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune from prison and respect the rights of all criminal defendants. A total of 25 Members of Congress signed the Congresswoman's letter. Copies of the letter were sent to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Ambassador Timothy M. Carney, the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti. The text of the letter follows:

We write to express our deep concern over recent developments in the case of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, who has been unjustly imprisoned in Haiti for over a year.

Judge Cluny Pierre Jules issued an order last month to indict former Prime Minister Neptune and about 30 other individuals on charges of participation in an alleged massacre in Saint-Marc. The order allows former Prime Minister Neptune and all of the other accused individuals to be tried without a jury. The trial would take place before a single judge who would not only rule on the guilt of the defendants but also decide their sentences. Judge Jules' decision is a violation of the Haitian Constitution, which gives defendants in cases of alleged "blood crimes" (crimes resulting in death) the right to a trial by jury.

For former Prime Minister Neptune to be brought to trial without a jury would be a travesty of justice. A criminal trial before a single judge would allow for the manipulation of the judicial system – subjecting the former prime minister to nothing more than a show-trial. If Mr. Neptune is wrongly convicted, the resulting injustice will have far reaching consequences. Mr. Neptune has already been detained illegally for over

- more -

We implore you to urge the interim government to release Prime Minister Neptune and respect the rights of all criminal defendants. We appreciate your attention to our concerns, and we await your response.

Maxine Waters
William Delahunt
Sherrod Brown
Major R. Owens
Edolphus Towns
Lynn Woolsey
John Conyers
Corrine Brown
Kendrick B. Meek
Donna Christensen
Robert Wexler
Diane Watson
Eleanor Holmes Norton

Mark Foley
Barbara Lee
Charles Rangel
Donald Payne
Melvin L. Watt
Bobby L. Rush
Maurice Hinchey
Jan Schakowsky
Raúl Grijalva
Dennis Kucinich
Joseph Crowley
Wm. Lacy Clay

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