

American Missionary from Bradenton Imprisoned in Haiti Since October

Daniel Pye, an American missionary originally from Bradenton, Florida, has been incarcerated in a Haitian prison since Oct. 13, 2010. No charges were revealed when Pye was originally arrested and subsequently held until Dec. 24, 2010.

On Christmas Eve of 2010 Pye was released, but immediately rearrested on charges of possessing illegal documents—a charge the Haitian Department of Justice by their own admission later called untrue.

Before his arrests, Pye worked for six years as head of a children's home that cared for 22 abandoned and endangered youth. They also played critical leadership and organizational roles in the aftermath of the earthquake with many organizations enlisting them.

On Oct. 13, 2010, Pye and his wife, Leann, appeared before a local magistrate to negotiate property and other assets with an organization for whom they formerly worked. After a settlement was agreed upon, Pye was quickly and inexplicably taken into custody. He was accompanied by officers to the jail and then imprisoned.

No specific charge was made against Pye. Instead, his family and attorney were told he was being held in the court's custody. Pye was instructed that he would not be released until he had signed over the assets to his former organization. When the paperwork was ready on Oct. 16, 2010, Pye complied, but was not released from the prison.

For a moment, on Christmas Eve, it seemed Pye's release had been secured. On Dec. 24, 2010, as he was being escorted out

of the prison to join his family, police officers handcuffed him and returned him inside. An order had come from the same magistrate responsible for the first arrest for Pye to be taken into custody on the charge of possessing illegal documents. Pye's attorney was later informed that the magistrate viewed Pye's government-issued Haiti identification card to be illegal.

Haitian Senator, and former mayor of Jacmel, Edo Zenny decried the event as a travesty and appealed to the Haitian Department of Justice on behalf of Pye. After an inquiry, the Department of Justice said that Pye's arrest was illegal and his government issued identification card was legitimate. The Department's judgments have been powerless to secure Pye's release, however.

During Pye's first arrest, representatives of the United States Embassy in Port au Prince told his family there was nothing they could do to influence his situation since he had not been charged with a crime. After his second arrest, the Embassy did send notice to Department of Justice in Haiti that they expected Pye's immediate release. Unfortunately, no action was taken to secure his release.

In his time in prison, Pye has suffered from malaria, a fungal infection, and several bouts of gastroenteritis. So far, Pye has been spared infection from cholera, which has afflicted other prisoners. Lack of activity and malnutrition have taken a toll on Pye's body. On Feb. 6, 2011, Pye began to vomit after meals and has subsisted since then on soda and small pieces of bread.

Pye's pregnant wife, Leann, had been his main supporter and provider until she returned the U.S. in early February to await the birth of their son. The youth from the children's home Pye started now supply him with meals and clothing. During his time in prison he has been able to reach out to these men and minister to them—even having his family bring in

a meal for the entire prison.

There has been no date set for a hearing for Pye or for his release. In February, the United States Embassy in Port au Prince sent two additional letters to the Department of Justice in Haiti asking that action be taken to release Pye. They have not received a response to their requests.