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Concern grows for pals, relatives still in Haiti

By Jules Crittenden

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As New Englanders plan to leave Haiti under the threat of a violent coup, a priest whose Port-au-Prince orphanage is supported by a local charity says he will stay.

“The situation is not good,” said Pere Jacques van der Stichele-Clarke. “Everybody is anxious. The men which can invade are not really opposition. They are bandits. They are killers.”

Pere Jacques said, “I can have a place to hide myself. But I will not abandon the children and the first president we have by election, who is for the people.”

His orphanage has received nearly \$100,000 since 1987 from “Pennies for Haiti,” mainly through St. Mary's Star of the Sea Church in Beverly. Marion Higgins of “Pennies for Haiti,” said Pere Jacques' support for Aristide and past clashes with rebel elements may place him in danger.

“He's very much in danger. I'm very concerned for him,” said Higgins.

Meanwhile, Lawrence Gallagher of Wellfleet is waiting for word from his stepdaughter, Lisa Brown, a music teacher at Nauset Regional High School on Cape Cod, who took a three-week leave to help build a school in Haiti. She was due to leave Friday but is trying to get a flight today.

“I wanted her to get the hell out long before this,” Gallagher said. “I'm glad she's on her way. I won't feel good about the whole thing until I see her home in Wellfleet.”

Meanwhile, state Rep. Marie St. Fleur and Haitian-Americans United will hold a meeting on the crisis at 6:30 tonight at the Church of the Nazarene in Codman Square. “Folks are scared. Many people here are afraid for their families,” St. Fleur (D-Dorchester) said. She and HAU have called for the United States and the United Nations to disarm gangs, provide a peacekeeping force and aid while mediating an end to the conflict.