



November 26, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. *
Prime Minister of Canada
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Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Prime Minister,

Subject: Escalating violence and insecurity in Haïti

On behalf of PSAC, I am writing to express alarm and deep concern regarding the escalating violence and growing tolerance for armed gangs by the police forces and the Government of Haïti. The collusion and corruption of the Jovenel Moïse government can no longer be ignored by Canada and the international community. We request that the Government of Canada, as a member of the Core Group, speak out and act immediately. Canada must reassess its financial and political support to the Jovenel Moïse government, including police training, until independent investigations are conducted into government corruption in the Petrocaribe scandal and ongoing state collusion with criminal gangs. We further ask that you refrain from providing economic, political and moral support for constitutional reform and elections which, under current conditions, risk intensifying the violence and instability in the country.

Impunity and corruption are at a historic high. In its final report on August 12, 2020, the Superior Court of Accounts and Administrative Litigation (CSCCA) documented the mismanagement and embezzlement of an astounding 1.459 billion euros from the Petrocaribe agreement that was intended for development projects. The report highlights the involvement of the business sector and the political elite, including former president Michel Martelly and current president Jovenel Moïse.

The Petrocaribe scandal demonstrates not only the severity, but also the systematic nature of corruption which feeds and reinforces impunity in the country. No progress has been made in the investigations on corruption and no one has been held accountable. Civil society mobilization against corruption have been met with brutal force by state authorities and a media campaign was orchestrated to target prominent members of the movement, creating a culture of fear. Why has the Canadian government remained silent?

The August 28th murder of Maître Monferrier Dorval, President of the Bar of Port-au-Prince shocked the Haitian and international media causing it to break its silence on the escalating violence and impunity in the country. In July, an agricultural school organized by SOFA, a prominent women's organization was attacked by a gang of unidentified armed men. In the first 6 months of 2020, at least 159 people were killed and 92 injured. In February 2020, the newly established United Nations Office in Haïti (BINUH) and the UN High Commission on

Human Rights co-published an extensive report on the 2019 Bel-Air massacre in Port-au-Prince, outlining serious allegations of collusion between gangs and state authorities, including police. In an earlier report on the 2018 massacre in La Saline, where over 50 people were killed, MINUSTAH claimed that none of the 13 recommendations issued to stop the violence and bring justice to the impacted communities had been implemented. These allegations suggest it is time to review continued international support for police training in Haïti.

As a trade union organization in Canada, we are concerned about the criminalization and punitive actions against Haitian union leaders by the government of Jovenel Moïse in collusion with Mr. Pierre Josué Agénor Cadet, Minister of Education. We are aware of several repressive actions, such as the forced transfers of union leaders Magalie George and Georges W. Franck, the salary suspension of Josué Mérilien, and the issuance of arrest warrants against union leaders in the education sector such as Josué Mérilien, Jeanty Manis, Wilmann Joseph, Adeka Israel, Eliscart Jimmy, Exantus Rigaud.

This wave of systemic repression, including dismissals, arbitrary arrests and death threats, are targeting the few sectors where workers have been able to organize unions such as in the public sector, education, and the Export Processing Zones. Our partner unions in Haïti and the Global Union Federations such as Public Services International (PSI) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) have reported that attacks on unions by government ministers in Haïti are common. The Public Works Minister, when seeking to rush through privatization in the electricity sector, ordered arrest warrants against electricity union leaders and police raids on their union office.

With the rise of repression against social mobilizations and social actors demanding respect for human rights in Haïti, trade union and civil society organizations fear the establishment of a repressive and authoritarian system. The establishment of a Provisional Electoral Council and plans to hold an election and a referendum on the constitution amidst such violence and without the support of the population and the opposition is completely inappropriate and dangerous. These elections and this referendum, the latter being carried out in defiance of the Haitian constitution, risk intensifying violence and intimidation by armed gangs.

We are deeply concerned that the Canadian government continues to provide support to the government of Jovenel Moïse in this context and again ask that you refrain from providing economic, political and moral support for constitutional reform and elections in Haïti.

We additionally ask that you support the calls by civil society in Haïti, and the international community, to the Haitian government to:

1. Stop tolerating the crimes of armed gangs on its territory and the climate of violence that has been going on for several months, terrorizing the population, social actors and undermining social dialogue which alone would allow an adequate exit from the crisis for the great majority;

2. End union persecution and respect workers' rights by ensuring the physical integrity of union leaders, ceasing all efforts to criminalize and prevent the continuation of union activities with arrest warrants, forced transfers of union leaders, raids on union offices and other punitive measures to prevent union members access to representation, and the right of the Federation of Electrical Workers Union, FESTREDH to automatic dues check-off.
3. Enter into negotiations in good faith with education workers, in particular the Platform of Haitian Teachers' Unions (PSEH), which calls for the payment of salary arrears, salary increases and the fair valuation and recognition of the role of teachers in society;
4. Maintain access to affordable public services such as electricity and water services for the population already suffering from the economic and social consequences of the pandemic;
5. Bring an end to impunity, whether it be the involvement of state agents in massive corruption cases such as the Petrocaribe scandal, or police in the well document massacres and assassinations increasingly taking place.

The time for quiet diplomacy has passed.

Sincerely,



Chris Aylward
National President
Public Service Alliance of Canada

c.c.: His Excellency Jovenel Moïse, President of Haïti
His Excellency Joseph Jouthe, Prime Minister of Haïti
Monsieur Bernard Sainvil, Dean of the Court of Appeal
Ducamel Gabriel, Commissioner
His Excellency Stuart Savage, Canadian Ambassador to Haïti
The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada
The Honourable Michael Chong, Official Opposition, Foreign Affairs Critic
MP Jack Harris, NDP Foreign Affairs Critic
MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, Bloc Québécois
MP Elisabeth May, Green Party
PSI International