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NEWS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE :

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Provocative Acts, Violence and Barbarism : RNDDH Sounds the Alarm

The National Network for the Defense of Human Rights (RNDDH), is deeply concerned about the atmosphere of tension and violence in the country. We believe it is our duty to sound the alarm in order to bring the authorities concerned to prevent deterioration of the overall security situation which is already precarious.

RNDDH would like to bring to everyone's attention that in our earlier positions, we have always called on political actors to put aside personal interests in order to benefit the majority and to work towards finding a solution to the current post-election and political crisis. Today, it is a clear situation where the principle of good governance is not present. On the contrary, those in power are using provocation and intimidation as governance strategies, thus trampling the principles and values of human rights.

The fact that the electoral body and the Executive continue to push for elections on January 24, 2016, at all costs despite several voices of Haitian society raised to demand its postponement, is a provocative act.

The Haitian people have responded to the government's provocations by holding almost daily protests which are increasingly violent, in which car windshields are being broken, tires and vehicles burned, and stones and broken bottles thrown. There are multiple cases of injury and material losses during these numerous protests.

RNDDH believes that the events observed in the capital on the 18th and 19th of January 2016 indicates that the use of increasing violence is a means of communication. On January

18, 2016, along Pavee Road, at least two (2) vehicles were burned and three (3) others were vandalized by protestors, including :

- A white Canter JMC, license plate number TP02605, which was burned. It belonged to DECA Group.
- A white Toyota Land Cruiser, license plate number AA95012, whose owner was at Super Home, an auction for house appliances, located on Pavee Road. As he left Super Home, he found his car on fire.
- A white Mitsubishi Nativa belonging to the owner of Super Home, license plate number AA47489, the windshield and several windows were broken.
- A gray Nissan Extera, license plate number LL01056, the windshield and four (4) other windows were broken.
- A white Nissan pick-up, license plate number TP23973, the windshield and several windows were also damaged.

In addition, Total gasoline station, located on Pavee Road, would have been burned if Haitian National Police (PNH) officers had not intervened in time.

For the most part, PNH seems to have responded to events with the excessive use of force. The launch of excessive tear gas tubes, rubber bullets and colored water, and brutal arrests are the modes of intervention of the country's only police force. It has never been able to support the protesters in their journey to their final destination, leaving the impression of being at the service of political powers.

On January 19, 2016, the PNH arrested nine (9) protesters. They are:

- Jeffer Lacroix
- Jonas Romulus
- Joseph Rolny
- Apollo Omisca
- Charles Jordan
- Wolfson Vital
- Clivens Lafalaise.
- Jonas Jean François
- Alexis Wancy

Jeffer Lacroix was released.

Unfortunately it is in this context of tension and widespread violence that the human rights organization has learned of a video circulating on social networks, showing policemen brutalizing within the grounds of a police station, two (2) young men. According to many, they were arrested while taking part in an anti-government demonstrations.

Along those lines, RDDH believes that regardless of when these young men were arrested and brutalized by PNH, it is our duty to remind the police institution of the framework of their legal response instruments consisting of regional and international protection of human rights as well as the laws of Haiti, and the general regulations of the PNH details in its Code of Conduct. Torture is not permitted in any of these documents.

RNDDH urges the Haitian authorities to change its governance strategy of provocation and intimidation because it cannot resolve the post-electoral and political crisis currently affecting the country. In this sense, the human rights organization asks again of the CEP to suspend organizing the "elections of January 24, 2016," in the interest of the nation.

RNDDH calls on protestors to remain a peaceful movement of protest and reminds everyone of the fact that the use of violence is prohibited by the law and is contrary to the exercise of the right to the freedom of expression. Breaking vehicle windshields, torching vehicles and setting fire to tires on the road are not democratic means of communication and will not in anyway resolve the current crisis.

Finally, RNDDH recommends to the General Directorate and the General Inspectorate of the PNH to document the use of force by police officers especially during anti-government demonstrations. In addition, the Haitian nation in general, but especially human rights organizations consider it the duty of the police force to conduct a meticulous investigation of the circumstances surrounding the young men who have been tortured with the objective of transferring the guilty officers to the judicial authorities.

Port-au-Prince, January 21, 2016.