

International Federation for Human Rights - FIDH  
National Network for the Defense of Human Rights - RNDDH  
Ecumenical Center for Human Rights - CEDH

Haiti: Getting out of the political crisis through peaceful, free, and credible elections

Port-au-Prince, Paris, January 29, 2016 - Haiti has plunged into a political crisis since the worrying fraud detected during the legislative and presidential elections of October 25, 2015 that led to the results challenged by opposition parties, violent demonstrations and a double postponement of the second round of the presidential election. Our organizations call incumbent President Michel Martelly to leave office within the period prescribed by the Constitution, February 7, 2016. They also call on political parties to find an agreement as soon as possible leading to the holding of free, credible and peaceful elections in order to avoid a triple crisis: political, institutional, and security.

Although the conditions for a free and credible electoral process were not met, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) has endorsed the results of the elections of 25 October with the first round Presidential candidate Jovenel Moise leading over opponent Jude Celestin. A Haitian NGO Coalition including RNDDH, conducted election observations and concluded that there was the presence of significant fraud.

In this context, the ruling party and the international community known as the "Core Group" called for the organization of the second round of presidential elections on January 24<sup>th</sup>, already postponed once from December 27, 2015. Meanwhile, the opposition candidate announced his intention to boycott the elections calling it an "electoral coup". The political crisis deepened with the CEP's announcement of the second round, even while an independent electoral assessment commission confirmed in early January that there were serious irregularities during the first round and considered that the conditions were not yet quite right for the organization of the second round.

Political tensions are at its peak. Violent clashes erupted in the streets of Port-au-Prince between opposition protestors and security forces in the days preceding the second round, causing one wounded by gunshot and widespread destruction. Journalists, such as Ms. Lillian Pierre-Paul, Programming Director of Radio Kiskeya, has been subject to threats and slander by the highest authorities for their coverage of the crisis. The CEP made its decision to postpone the second round of presidential elections indefinitely out of fear that violence would explode.

The current situation creates fear of a prolonged political crisis, leading to an institution void marked by the outgoing President without a replacement. Now the country needs democratic institutions, strong and trusted by Haitian citizens in order to face significant economic, social, humanitarian, and human right challenges five years after the earthquake that devastated the country leaving more than 300,000 dead.

An FIDH mission was in the country from January 24 to 30, 2016 to accompany its member organizations, RNDDH and the CEDH, in their meetings with diplomatic representatives of France, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, the European Union, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and many other Haitian civil society organizations.

Given the current political crisis and the risk of institutional paralysis which could lead the country into a cycle of violence, our organizations call on the Haitian authorities and political parties to exercise restraint and avoid inflammatory speeches so that protests may take place peacefully.

Our organizations also call on Haitian political parties to work towards avoiding the dangerous crisis of an institutional void. This can include the establishment of a consensual and provisional transitional regime tasked with organizing the second round of the presidential elections in the shortest time and under the terms of free and credible. To legitimize this process, our organizations recommend the restructuring of the CEP, the implementation of the recommendations of the Independent Electoral Assessment Commission and verification of votes in the first round by an independent body.

FIDH, RNDDH, and CEDH call on the international community, including the "Core gGroup" to support the organization of credible and competitive elections that respect the choice of the Haitian voters, returning the necessary stability to the country through a satisfactory electoral process for the entire Haitian population.