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Press Release

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Carnival 2016 : The President of the Republic Attacks the Psychic and Moral Integrity of Two Haitian Journalists

The National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) has taken notice of the 2016 carnivalesque merengue, entitled "Bal Bannann Nan", performed by the musical group of the President of the Republic, Sweet Micky and sung by President Michel Joseph Martelly.

The lyrics of this merengue uses nicknames Ti Mona and Ti Lili to refer to two (2) Haitian journalists, namely, Jean Monard Metellus and Liliane Pierre-Paul, and then attacks them in a way that is offensive, insulting, and disrespects their honor and reputation.

RNDDH notes that once again the President Joseph Michel Martelly has gone too far, forgetting his status as Head of State, in insulting citizens who criticize his mismanagement of power. In doing so, he shows his inability to behave as informed citizen, or even a democrat, able to accept criticism in order to improve his governance.

RNDDH draws everyone's attention to the fact that President Michel Joseph Martelly has written this song in a context where Carnival in Haiti has lost its cultural flavor. For over a decade, the colorful notes have been replaced by bawdiness and innuendos each more daring than the others, and folkloric dances have been replaced by vulgar swaying. Women are now favorite subjects and lyrics are often derogatory and discriminatory, touting the sexual abilities of men, inviting the outright rape of women, or accusations of women being whores and 'michetonneuses'. Carnival is now synonymous with

disrespect, contempt, and public insults. We sadly recall the lyrics of a celebrated *2014 Carnival song entitled, Avili Yo, by Djakout Mizik*, which dragged a woman's name through the mud.

RNDDH regrets that in these instances the *Ministry of Culture*, the *Ministry of Communication* and the *Ministry of the Status of Women and Women's Rights* are not intervening. On the contrary, they have always preferred a practice of turning a deaf ear and allowing the bands to create lyrics amongst themselves. And, the boundary inciting violence is usually crossed in their lyrics..

However, today the situation is very worrying because it is the President of the Republic himself, Joseph Michel Martelly, who is directly attacking citizens and journalists. It is a classic case of violation of the right to mental and moral integrity, a right guaranteed by international and regional human rights instruments to which the Haitian State is a party.

RNDDH does not expect the current ministries who are involved in the organization of carnival to intervene being what they are. To do so, it would require the ministries concerned to show a courage that they have not before.

RNDDH expresses its solidarity to Liliane Pierre-Paul and Jean Monard Metellus and the two (2) main victims of this disturbing comedy. It urges them to continue with their commitment undaunted by a President of the Republic, who appears to have lost his bearings a long time ago.

RNDDH encourages journalists Liliane Pierre-Paul and Jean Monard Metellus to file complaints with the judicial authorities against the President of the Republic *for public insults and defamation*. In addition, the human rights organization invite Liliane Pierre-Paul and Jean Monard Metellus to seize the moment to engage the *Committee against Torture of the United Nations* for this treatment as cruel, inhumane, and degrading which is in violation to their rights of mental and moral integrity by the State, in order to deter repetition of such acts.

Port-au-Prince, February 3, 2016