

**National Human Rights Defense Network
(RNDDH)**



**Earthquakes in Haiti:
Vulnerability of citizens must be a priority for authorities**

January 12, 2022

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I. Introduction

1. January 12, 2010 – January 12, 2022: twelve (12) years since a 7.3 magnitude earthquake on the Richter scale hit the western, southeastern and Nippes departments of the country. The resulting human and material losses are immeasurable. But even more, the very considerable sequelae, remain alive in the collective memory.
2. While the Haitian population has been forced to recover by itself from its wounds without any support from state authorities, in the years following this great cataclysm, the earth has continued to tremble throughout the country, resulting in both human and material losses.
3. Today, on the twelfth year of commemoration of the earthquake of January 12, 2010, and in memory of all the victims in Haiti, the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) is duty bound to share with the public its considerations and remarks on the behavior of the State authorities vis-à-vis the victims.

II. Methodology

4. During 2021, the RNDDH visited ten (10) accommodation camps and relocation sites in the Department of the West. They still welcome the victims of the earthquake of January 12, 2010. The heads of neighboring state institutions such as police stations or their antennae, town halls or their annexes, etc., were met.
5. In addition, monitoring actions were carried out by the RNDDH and its regional structures in the Northwest, Artibonite, Nippes, South and Grand'Anse and subsequently by the structures themselves.
6. The information gathered from the victims, as well as from the meetings, is used in the development of this document.

III. Disaster Review

7. The earthquake of January 12, 2010, of magnitude 7.3 on the Richter scale caused the death of at least two hundred and twenty-two thousand five hundred and seventeen (222,517) people and the disappearance of three hundred thousand (300,000) others. Thousands of other victims remained physically disabled.

8. The earthquake of October 6, 2018, of magnitude 5.9 on the Richter scale caused the death of fifteen (15) people in the communal section Lapointe, Port-de-Paix, in the department of North-West and Gros-Morne, in the department of Artibonite. At least three hundred (300) other people came out injured. Seven thousand one hundred and twenty-four (7,124) houses were damaged and one thousand two hundred and twenty-seven (1,227) other houses were completely destroyed.

9. The earthquake of August 14, 2021, of magnitude 7.2 on the Richter scale particularly affected the departments of Nippes, Sud and Grand'Anse. At least two thousand two hundred and forty-eight (2,248) people died. Another twelve thousand seven hundred and sixty-three (12,763) were injured. Three hundred and twenty-nine (329) others are missing. Two (2) people were also killed in Bassin Bleu, in the Northwest department. And about six hundred and ninety thousand (690,000) people, representing 40% of the total population of Grand'Anse, Nippes and the South, were affected by this cataclysm.

10. On December 21, 2021, an earthquake of magnitude 4.6 on the same scale, hit the city of Les Cayes again. One hundred and fifty (150) people came out injured.

IV. Situation in the Department of the West

Twelve (12) years later, housing camps and relocation sites, which welcomed the victims of January 12, 2010, still exist.

11. On the infrastructures: Having not been built to serve all these years, the camps of lodging and sites of relocation, constituted for the most part of makeshift shelters in very bad condition, of unfinished houses and finished constructions of concrete, have a heterogeneous appearance. This was noticed in the camps Terrain Toto, Refugees, Bénédiction, Carradeux, Jerusalem, Saint Stephen I and Saint Stephen II and Canaan camp.

12. In most concrete constructions, enclosure walls and boundary barriers were also noted, indicating a strong propensity to indicate that spaces are in fact private property. In this sense, committee members have already made representations to the General Directorate of Taxation (DGI) to have this body consider them to be property owner, who would tend to regularize their situation.

13. On access to latrines: The issue of latrines and/or community health blocks in accommodation camps and relocation sites remains a major concern today. According to the information gathered on the ground, it is only in the Lumane Casimir Village and Corail Cesselesse that citizens have access to the latrines. At Village Lumane Casimir, each house has its own toilet and at Camp Corail Cesselesse, one (1) toilet is available for four (4) shelters. Apart from these examples, the latrines built for twelve (12) years are all in a poor state of dysfunction. They overflow for the most part and emit a disgusting smell. This was denounced at Saint Stephen I, Saint Stephen II, Terrain Toto, Refugees, Bénédiction, Carradeux, where residents are obliged to resort to other alternatives to relieve themselves.

14. On access to health care: Only Camp Corail Cesselesse has two (2) clinics where residents pay one hundred (100) gourdes to be examined. As for the other sites, residents must go outside to access medical services.

15. With respect to the spread of Coronavirus disease, no state accompaniment has been recorded. No prevention materials were distributed. No screening was done either. If the occupants of some sites like Terrain Toto, Refugees, Bénédiction and Carradeux do their best to protect themselves, they deplore the fact that no awareness-raising activities have been carried out by the State authorities and that no hand-washing stations have been installed.

16. On access to water: In the same way as access to health care, finding water in accommodation camps and relocation sites is a challenge. Saint Etienne I and Saint Etienne II each have a water point for daily activities. The five (5) gallon bucket is sold at fifty (50) gourdes. However, the situation is not similar in other areas as residents generally must travel to obtain water. They shall spend between fifteen (15) and twenty-five (25) gourds for the five (5) gallon container of water assigned to daily services and forty (40) to fifty (50) gourds for the five (5) gallon container of drinking water.

17. On access to electrical power: Generally speaking, sites are not electrified. Some residents are reduced to stealing electricity and others, to paying a total of five thousand (5,000) gourdes to individuals who have acquired transformers at their own expense.

18. On access to education: School children in accommodation camps and relocation sites attend public or private establishments, depending on the availability of these

establishments and the means of their parents. For example, in the vicinity of Camp Saint Etienne, there are two (2) private schools while public schools are located at the Croix-des-Missions. As for Camp Corail, the children attend the National School and a high school nearby. Those in the Lumane Casimir Village have access to a public school and a private school.

19. On the Presence of the State and/or a humanitarian organization: In general, the police stations and antennae represent the only and rare symbols of representativeness of the Haitian state in the camps of accommodation and sites of relocation of the department of the West. This promotes the proliferation of armed gangs.

20. Exceptionally, in Corail Cesselesse, the town hall of Croix-des-Bouquets has set up an annex and helps the most disadvantaged. For example, it was reported to the RNDDH that in 2021, in Jerusalem families received seventeen thousand five hundred (17,500) gourdes each to engage in income-generating activities. School supplies were provided to children who also received a one-year payment.

21. The road services of the Town Hall of Tabarre have made efforts to better manage the camps that depend on this commune. In this sense, residents have received formal permission to build houses. This is the case of Village Eden and Village Caonabo.

22. In some camps and relocation sites, NGOs such as Terre des Hommes and Solidarité visit the victims and sometimes help them. However, sometimes residents are victims of groups pretending to be members of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), demanding money while promising them aid in return.

23. On recorded eviction attempts: Manoeuvres and evictions attempts are recorded in some accommodation camps and relocation sites. For example, in 2019, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) proposed twenty-five thousand (25,000) gourdes to residents of Saint Etienne I and Saint Etienne II to rent a house. Similarly, residents of the Refugee Camp, which overlooks the commune of Delmas, all claimed to have been persecuted by the communal authorities.

24. On Security in Accommodation Camps and Relocation Sites: Some residents stated that, for the year 2021, they did not have to face any problems of insecurity. For example, in the Lumane Casimir Village, the security situation is calm, despite the absence of the police institution. Camp Saint-Etienne, which in the past was plagued by

insecurity, offers a relatively safe environment to its residents because, according to some of them, the Chen mechan gang that controls the space. The occupants of Corail Cesselesse also stated that they did not have a problem of insecurity throughout 2021.

25. However, for other accommodation camps and relocation sites, the situation remains very precarious. This was advanced by the residents of Toto Field, Refugees, Bénédiction and Carradeux. In these two (2) last areas controlled by the armed gangs led by Jean Marie so known and Fred BAZILE, the occupants are regularly subjected to armed attacks.

26. In 2021, all residents of Tabarre-Issa were forced to abandon space after spending several years in armed attacks by gangs operating in the area. Some of them were murdered and their homes were ransacked or set on fire, under the impotent gaze of the police authorities.

27. Cases of domestic violence, assault, rape and robbery are recorded daily in these insecure camps. And, although rare, cases of murder and kidnapping have also been reported.

28. Moreover, and according to what has been reported to the RNDDH, the sub-police station of the Croix-des-Bouquets on which the Village Lumane Casimir and the Camp Corail Cesselesse depend, as well as the police branch installed at the Camp Bénédiction are facing great difficulties. There are very few police officers. Operating equipment and rolling stock are insufficient or unusable.

V. *Situation in the departments of North-West and Artibonite*

29. In the communities of Morne Blocos, Morne Cayo, Chalet and downtown Port de Paix, the material losses following the earthquake of October 6, 2018, are enormous.

30. The police station as well as the prison of Port-de-Paix, the administrative complex of Port-de-Paix, the police station of Gros-Morne, educational institutions of the two (2) communes as well as hospitals and health centers were severely damaged.

31. Three (3) years later and despite the promises made, the public buildings were not repaired or rebuilt. The Immaculate Conception Hospital in Port-de-Paix has returned to service not because it has been repaired but because those in charge have been

content to use the spaces that can, without proceeding with the redevelopment of the building.

32. Three (3) years after being abandoned by the state authorities, the victims of the departments of North-West and Artibonite are struggling to recover. Houses in some communities are still not being rebuilt. And, despite the numerous calls for help from the population, the authorities did not intervene, except to set up a propaganda machine, suggesting that the aid was coordinated in the fairest way possible and that it reached the victims.

VI. *Situation in the South Department*

33. In the Department of the South, the victims of the earthquake of August 14, 2021, are already left to their own devices. They have great difficulty meeting their needs. Many families do not have shelter. They live in spontaneous camps that were formed in Les Cayes, on the football field commonly known as Gabion, in Fond Fred and in Kay Jeannot – a space also used for the Thursday market. For the most part, they are waiting for state support, as promised.

34. However, state authorities are not present. Once again, humanitarian organizations in the south are helping the victims. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) counted one hundred and twenty-two (122). The RNDDH, through its regional structure, was able to meet with some of them such as Food for The Poor, the International Medical Corps (IMC), the World Food Programmed (WFP) and the MENAEM Foundation, etc. Churches such as the Southern Baptist Evangelical Mission (MEBSH) were also surveyed. These non-state institutions are involved in various aspects: they distribute shelter, provide health care, train on mental health and gender-based violence after disasters, distribute cash to victims, etc.

35. Most of the schools that were destroyed and/or damaged by the August 14, 2021, earthquake is now operating in tents and shelters with reduced capacity.

36. Today, the municipalities of the South, together with the MENAEM Foundation, intend to carry out a census of the families whose houses have been destroyed, likely for a reconstruction program.

37. It should also be noted that since August 14, 2021, several earthquakes, as well as

smaller earthquakes, have been recorded, often causing panic and causing the population to leave concrete houses

VII. *Situation in the Department of Nippes*

38. The victims of the earthquake live, in the department of Nippes, in very difficult conditions even if some were able to count on the support of members of their family, in order to improve their general conditions. In this sense, houses have been rebuilt, patched or repaired using used sheet metal and tarpaulins.

39. If the central and local authorities are absent, at least sixty-five (65) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been identified by OCHA, including Red Cross, Compassion, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), etc.

40. A point of supply of running water was installed on the public square of the Azile, houses were rebuilt, plates were offered to the victims. These interventions allowed those who were in the public square of the Azile to settle where their house had collapsed.

41. In Arnaud, the victims of the earthquake are recovering themselves, without the help of municipal and local authorities.

42. In Anse-à-Veau, the building of the Lycée Boisrond Tonnerre was severely hit, a tent was erected on the courtyard of the establishment. Another was installed in a space located in front of the high school. The two (2) vacations run at reduced capacity. And, the administration of the high school, installed in part of the damaged building, tries to provide the usual services, waiting for the work of redevelopment of the space.

VIII. *Situation in the Department of Grand'Anse*

43. The security situation in the Grand'Anse department, particularly after the earthquake of August 14, 2021, is worrying. Cases of armed robbery have increased exponentially. And some areas such as Fond-Cochon commune de Roseau, Julie commune de Chambellan and Desormeaux commune de Dame-Marie, are classified red, due to the degradation of security.

44. Sixty-four (64) NGOs operate in this department where the Haitian state is also

absent.

45. In Jérémie, most of the victims who had lost their homes abandoned the area to live elsewhere, according to their financial means. Some of the houses were cracked and did repairs.

46. Schools that have suffered damage, operate under tarpaulins or arbors built for the purpose. A few were relocated to institutions that had been little or not affected by the earthquake. The hospitals of Jérémie deprived of everything and severely damaged on August 14, 2021, could not meet the needs of the population and the wounded of the earthquake had to go to Les Cayes, to receive the care that their cases required. This is a situation that continues to this day.

47. In Pestel, Central and Local Authorities have not undertaken anything to support the victims of the August 14, 2021, earthquake. Some NGOs conducted a census to build new houses for the victims.

48. In Bonbon, no assistance was offered to the victims, if one withdraws the promise of the Episcopal Church to build five (5) houses for the benefit of five (5) among the most vulnerable families in the area. Two (2) of these houses are currently under construction.

49. In Roseaux, the security situation is precarious. Armed gangs have been forming and controlling the commune for some time. They held their power especially after the earthquake of August 14, 2021. The buildings are in very bad condition.

50. In Corail, citizens are timidly trying to rise on their own. Some people are assisted by their relatives in the diaspora, others are still waiting for State aid. One NGO organized training sessions on earthquake-resistant construction methods for some engineers. Today, according to what was reported to the RNDDH, several of the beneficiaries of this training are in the process of repairing the administrative complex of Corail, which had been damaged.

IX. State Response to Disasters

51. The management of the January 12, 2010, earthquake was catastrophic. The Haitian state then beheaded and overwhelmed by events, did not know how to react. He left the

field open to humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. However, due to a fierce battle for visibility, some areas were crumbling under humanitarian aid while others were not receiving any. There have been interventions that have been made in a way that does not respect humanitarian accountability rules. And by the end of the day, the victims had remained more vulnerable than they had ever been.

52. On September 25, 2018, at the annual Concordia Summit in New York, the then President of the Republic, Jovenel MOÏSE declared that Haiti, having made great progress in managing disasters, the country has become more resilient and more able to cope with the natural disasters that lie ahead.

53. Less than a month later, the earthquake that hit the departments of North-West and Artibonite proved the contrary. Indeed, the coordination of aid took place in total chaos. The Ministry of the Interior visited the site where it stated that all assistance would be coordinated by the Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC). It was also decided that, unlike Port-au-Prince, no tent city would be created. In the end, only a few distributions of food kits were made in total disrespect for human dignity and an evaluation of the houses was carried out. The words "DPC" were engraved in red on some walls, but neither the homeowners nor the municipal authorities we met with could interpret it.

54. For the earthquake of August 14, 2021, the state authorities once again affirmed that they did not want to repeat the mistakes of 2010 and promised to better organize assistance to victims of the departments of the South, Nippes and Grand'Anse. However, even today, the latter are still waiting for the fulfilment of the accompanying promises made to them.

X. Comments and Recommendations

55. From 2010 to 2021, three (3) high-magnitude earthquakes struck Haiti, resulting in seven (7) geographic departments of the country – West, South-East, Nippes, South, Grand'Anse, North-West and Artibonite – of greater human and material losses than the others. Meanwhile, the earth has never stopped shaking, a state of affairs that does not seem to worry the state authorities.

56. If for the earthquake of January 12, 2010, the Haitian State could advance the excuse of the surprise and the lack of training, capacities and ability in the management of

disasters of this size, for those that occurred on October 6, 2018, and August 14, 2021, the desperate failure to coordinate humanitarian aid is inexcusable.

57. In particular, the management to date of this new disaster recorded in the Far South proves, if need be, that on the one hand, no lessons have been drawn from the earthquake of January 12, 2010, and on the other hand, the country is not prepared to meet the needs of the victims. And the fact by the Haitian State to always play the card of the policy of usury vis-à-vis this population which does not expect anything from them, will certainly not reduce the vulnerability of the country in the face of natural disasters.

58. Today, twelve (12) years after the earthquake of January 12, 2010, Haiti has no more hospitals or health centers than before. Consequently, with each disaster, the existing health structures are outdated, since they cannot cope with the resulting demands for health care. Furthermore, no seismic construction policy is known or applied. And the Haitian population in general is not more sensitized than before, to adopt the behaviors needed, in case of earthquake.

59. In the West department, there are still accommodation camps and relocation sites that were set up in the aftermath of the earthquake of January 12, 2010, or built a little later, with the help of humanitarian agencies. And, in addition to the daily difficulties associated with the extreme poverty in which the population living in these areas is floundering, are added the security problems, often insurmountable for them. Indeed, many armed gangs have chosen to operate in camps and relocation sites, leading many families to exile.

60. The RNDDH believes that at this stage, it is no longer sufficient for state authorities to assert that the country is better able to cope with natural disasters. These authorities must also be present to effectively accompany the victims, coordinate humanitarian interventions, and set up communication structures accessible to the victims, to monitor the interventions and avoid human rights violations. It is at this price that the Haitian authorities will prove that the vulnerability of citizens to natural disasters is a priority for them. It is also at this price that they will greet in the best way possible, the memory of the many victims of earthquakes registered in Haiti since January 12, 2010.