



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE**

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**The damage caused by the first rains of the hurricane season should prompt the Haitian government to take action to protect the environment.**

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1. The hurricane season was declared officially open on June 1, 2023.
2. The National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) notes that only two (2) days after this announcement, on June 3, 2023, heavy rains hit at least seven (7) of the country's geographic departments: Ouest, Nippes, Sud-Est, Sud, Grand'Anse, Centre and Nord-Ouest, causing loss of life and property.
3. The floods of the La Rouyonne and Momance rivers in Léogane, La Gosseline in Jacmel, Chaud'Eau and Rivière froide in Carrefour, Ravine de Mariani, Rivière de Betize in Faucher, Grand Goâve, Rivière La Digue in Petit-Goâve, Rivière grise in Plaine du Cul-de-Sac, Rivière des Côtes-de-Fer, etc., were unleashed, just as they were supposed to be. were unleashed, as seen in videos circulating on social media, on June 3, 2023.
4. The partial death toll presented by the state authorities on June 5, 2023, during the course of the day was estimated at fifty-three (53), including forty-two (42) dead and eleven (11) missing. Thousands of families have been affected and thousands of others have had to take refuge elsewhere, abandoning their homes.
5. With its regional structures, RNDDH has been able to trace thirty-five (35) of the dead and missing:
  - Six (6) in the Sud-Est department. Three (3) of them lost their lives in the sinking of the boat Métropole, recorded early in the morning of June 3, 2023, while two (2) others

died in Côtes-de-Fer. The body of one of these victims was discovered at Carrefour Georges. The other died in the Bas Coq chante area;

- Nineteen (19) in Léogane, in the West department, including ten (10) women, five (5) men and four (4) minors. Eight (8) others are missing, including four (4) women, two (2) men and two (2) minors. However, local residents feel that this provisional toll does not reflect reality, as the loss of life is much higher;
- Two (2) in Petit-Goâve, in the West department.

6. In addition, vehicles, livestock, plantations, and garbage, especially expanded Styrofoam dishes and plastic bottles, were washed out to sea. Several houses, roads and engineering structures were completely submerged by the floodwaters. At least one hospital, a bank and the premises of state institutions were flooded, and landslides were recorded.

- The commune of Léogane, located in the Ouest department, is the most affected by these bad weather conditions. Many houses in Nan Dampus were completely submerged. In the videos circulating on social media on June 3, 2023, people, livestock, vehicles, and other objects were seen floating in the water in Léogane. Hôpital Sainte Croix was flooded, causing patients to flee. Those who could not move on their own were helped by their parents and relatives who came to get them. The premises of the Banque Nationale de Crédit (BNC) in Léogane were also flooded;
- All the communes in the South-East department were hit by the flooding. Farms were destroyed and roads damaged. In Belle-Anse, several houses were flooded, but the most damage was recorded in the Lagon area. In Thiotte, in the Boucklin area, several houses were also flooded, as were two (2) rice warehouses;
- In the commune of Petit-Goâve, damage was mainly recorded in the town, notably in the Wharf area, where the offices of the National Port Authority (APN), the National Directorate of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DINEPA) and the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication are located.

7. Several bridges were covered by water: the Route neuf bridge at Carrefour Fourgy, Grand'Anse Bridge, Petit-Goâve Bridge, Mariani Bridge, Croix-des-Missions Bridge, etc.

8. Landslides were recorded at Bourdon in the West department, at Cange in the Centre department, on the road leading to La Vallée de Jacmel and at Coq Chante, in the South-East department, etc.

9. State institutions called upon to respond to disasters were taken by surprise by the rains and subsequent damage. And it was not until late in the day on June 3, 2023, that de facto Prime Minister Ariel HENRY announced that he had activated the National Emergency Operations Center (COUN), with a view to taking stock of the human and material losses incurred and providing appropriate responses.

10. RNDDH notes that every year, natural disasters caused by a total absence of public policy for the preservation and protection of the environment result in enormous human and material losses. And every year, the state authorities are content to chant prevention messages repeatedly, without really doing anything concrete about it, except noting the damage and promising to come to the aid of the victims.

11. Clearly, this strategy, which has never produced results, is not enough.

12. RNDDH believes that these first rains of the 2023 hurricane season raise fears of this season, which will not end until November 2023, and which could just as easily be littered with storms and hurricanes. And the fact that the state authorities have let themselves be taken by surprise by these rains bodes ill for the future.

13. RNDDH believes that the damage recorded on June 3, 2023, proves, if any were needed, the deplorable state of the country's environment. In this sense, state authorities are more than ever obliged to adopt adequate measures to protect the environment.

14. State authorities must also take a serious look at risk and disaster management, by cleaning up canals, channeling rivers, adopting measures to put an end to unbridled tree-cutting, and building community capacity to reduce damage caused by bad weather, circulating information on weather forecasts within or at least close to communities, raising community awareness of how to behave before, during and after disasters, and providing local civil protection bodies with the necessary resources to enable them to take emergency action when required.

15. RNDDH extends its sincere sympathies to the victims of the rains that have hit the country, particularly those who, due to the activities of armed gangs, had already been forced to abandon their homes and were finding themselves in public squares or other spaces that had not been prepared to receive people.

16. RNDDH takes this opportunity to remind the State authorities that the right to a healthy environment is a fundamental human right which entails responsibilities on the part of the State, including the responsibility to adopt immediate measures to preserve the life of all living beings and to protect the wildlife in Haiti.

Port-au-Prince, June 5, 2023