



# National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH)



## Hurricane Melissa: RNDDH Denounces the Inadequacy of Measures Adopted by State Authorities

November 06, 2025

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### **I. Introduction**

1. The torrential rains caused by Hurricane Melissa, which struck the country on October 29, 2025, resulted in widespread flooding and river overflows. The human and material losses are enormous: at least forty-three (43) people have died, numerous livestock were swept away, homes were flooded, and entire gardens and plantations were submerged.

2. Deeply affected by this heavy toll, the National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) met with several relatives of the deceased in Petit-Goâve and conducted field visits through its regional structures in various departments of the country to assess the situation.

3. One week after the disaster, by sharing its findings with the public, RNDDH seeks to hold the Haitian State accountable for its responsibilities.

### **II. *Hurricane Melissa Assessment***

4. According to the report issued by the Permanent Secretariat for Risk and Disaster Management on November 3, 2025, the impact of Hurricane Melissa on Haiti is presented as follows:

- Forty-three (43) people have died, including twenty-five (25) in the single commune of Petit-Goâve;
- Thirteen (13) people are missing;
- Twenty-one (21) people were injured;
- River overflows caused major floods recorded in at least thirty-one (31) communes across the Greater South;
- Thousands of homes were flooded and/or destroyed;
- Nearly two thousand (2,000) people are currently living in temporary shelters.

5. Although rainfall was recorded throughout the country, the vast majority of human and material losses occurred in the Greater South, namely the geographic departments of the

Southeast, Nippes, South, and Grand'Anse, as well as in Petit-Goâve, a commune in the West Department.

***a) Deceased Persons***

6. In the commune of Petit-Goâve, where the damage was particularly severe, between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., the La Digue River overflowed, damaging the bridge and flooding the neighborhoods of La Digue and Borne-Soldat. At least twenty-five (25) people lost their lives there. RNDDH interviewed relatives of seventeen (17) of the deceased. Twelve (12) of them, or 48%, were children.

7. The following testimonies were reported to the organization:

- **Luter CILIEN**, aged eighty (80), father of six (6) children, lived in the area of Anba Mòn, in Borne-Soldat. On October 29, 2025, he was alone at home when the river's overflow swept him and his house away. His son, **Johnny CILIEN**, aged forty (40), found his body around 10:00 a.m., hanging from a tree. The ambulance of Notre-Dame Hospital in Petit-Goâve removed the body and transported it to the hospital morgue.
- **Yvrose ATTIS**, aged seventy (70), mother of eight (8) children, lived with her granddaughter **Cassandra ATTIS**, aged twenty-two (22). Around 4:00 a.m., both were swept away by the La Digue River, along with their coastal home. **Cassandra ATTIS** managed to cling to a vehicle, but her grandmother **Yvrose ATTIS** perished. Her body was found by relatives on a nearby road in La Digue and transported to a private morgue in Petit-Goâve.
- **Ediouna CHARLES**, a five-year-old girl, lost her life. She was with her parents, **Edouard CHARLES** and **Natacha SEPTEMBRE**, when she was swept away by the floodwaters. Her mother, father, and **Stéphanie FERJUSTE**, who was with them, were rescued by local residents who pulled them from the water as they drifted toward the sea. The CHARLES family lived in Fond Fable, the 10th communal section of Petit-Goâve.
- **Viergeline GODARD**, **Elisabeth GODARD**, and **Wideline GODARD** lost their lives in Petit-Goâve during Hurricane Melissa. They were six (6) years, three (3) years, and one (1) month old, respectively. The bodies of **Viergeline** and **Elisabeth**

**GODARD** were recovered, while the body of baby **Wideline GODARD** was reportedly devoured by dogs, according to their aunt, with whom the children lived.

- **Jonalson CILIE**N, **Shelsy CILIE**N, **Tovinsky CILIE**N, and **Frantzsesca CILIE**N, aged six (6), three (3), and two (2) years (for the last two), were the children of **Jonathan CILIE**N and **Jacqueline DESROCHES**. They were at home between 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. when their house, located at Carrefour La Digue, was completely submerged. All were swept away. The body of **Jonalson CILIE**N was found five (5) days later, trapped beneath the La Digue bridge. The bodies of **Shelsy** and **Tovinsky CILIE**N, swept from their mother's arms by the raging water, were found the same day, October 29, 2025, on a nearby street in the locality. **Frantzsesca's** body was recovered near a wall close to their home. All bodies were transported to a private morgue in Petit-Goâve. Their parents survived.
- **Calla HYPOLITE**, aged twenty-two (22), lived with a physical disability. She was staying with her host family in Borne-Soldat when, around 4:00 a.m., the La Digue floodwaters tore her from the arms of her cousin **Yvane FRANÇOIS**, also aged twenty-two (22), who was trying to save her. **Calla HYPOLITE's** body was found in the yard, buried under mud, and taken to a private morgue in Petit-Goâve.
- **Lenchise ROSICLAIRE**, born August 13, 2013 (aged twelve), and **Keïcha ROSICLAIRE**, born March 9, 2022 (aged three), were the daughters of **Kella TATAILLE**, aged thirty-five (35). Both were swept away by the water. Their bodies were found trapped under the La Digue bridge: **Lenchise's** on the same day, and **Keïcha's** three (3) days later, on the ground near La Digue. Both were taken to a city morgue.
- **Elismé JEAN PAUL**, aged sixty-seven (67), father of eight (8) children, was at home near the La Digue bridge with his wife **Aderose BRUNVILUS**, also aged sixty-seven (67), and two granddaughters, **Stania JEAN PAUL**(22) and **Dorlencia CHARLES** (7). Around 4:00 a.m. on October 29, 2025, **Elismé** and **Stania** were swept away. **Stania** managed to survive by clinging to a tree, but **Elismé's** lifeless body was found the same day in Trou Sable, a nearby area. His body remains in the morgue. It is worth noting that **Elismé JEAN PAUL** had lived in his home for over forty (40) years.

**Yvencia MERCURE**, aged five (5), and **Johana MERCURE**, aged three (3), were at home in Borne-Soldat with their father **Elisson MERCURE**, aged forty-seven (47), when around 3:00 a.m., the floodwaters carried them all away. **Elisson** was rescued, but both daughters perished. Their bodies are now in a city morgue.

- **Esaïe GENTY**, aged thirty-one (31), lived with his partner **Valencia CRIBLE**, aged thirty (30), and his stepdaughter **Schneïdine JEAN-PIERRE**, aged five (5). **Esaïe GENTY** perished in the flood, but his partner and stepdaughter survived.

#### ***b) Injured Persons and Those Who Lost Everything***

8. Still in Petit-Goâve, several people were injured. Others lost everything they owned and, for the most part, had to seek refuge either in temporary shelters or with relatives. Here are some examples:

- **Johnny CILIEN**, aged forty (40), father of four (4) children, was at home with his family in Borne-Soldat when, around 3:00 a.m., his house was flooded. By 6:00 a.m., they managed to escape, but their material losses were immense.
- **Cassandra ATTIS**, aged twenty-two (22), lived with her grandmother **Yvrose ATTIS**, who perished in the disaster. **Cassandra** survived only because she managed to cling to a vehicle. She now suffers from pain and health problems she did not have before. She is currently staying with her aunt, **Rosena ATTIS**, in the same area.
- **Rosena ATTIS**, aged forty (40), mother of three (3) children, lived with her family in La Digue. Around 3:00 a.m., her house was flooded. She and her family remain in the area, but she lost everything she owned.
- **Jonathan CILIEN**, born October 22, 1983, aged forty-two (42), father of four (4) children, was at home at Carrefour La Digue with his wife **Jacqueline DESROCHES**, aged thirty-five (35), and their children when, between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m., their house was inundated and submerged. **Jonathan** and **Jacqueline** were hurled against trees by the force of the water. They survived, but all four of their children perished. Today, **Jacqueline DESROCHES** suffers from knee injuries and

other physical complications resulting from the ordeal. She was hospitalized at Notre-Dame Hospital in Petit-Goâve.

- **Natania SIMON**, aged twenty-four (24), lived in Borne-Soldat with **Calla HYPPOLITE** (22), who died in the disaster, as well as four (4) other family members: her mother **Terèse CADET** (56), her father **Joël SIMON** (54), her brother **Jededly SIMON** (22), and her cousin **Yvane FRANÇOIS** (24). Around 4:00 a.m., their home was flooded, and parts of its walls collapsed. **Natania** also reported losing livestock and all of her belongings.
- **Kella TATAILLE**, aged thirty-five (35), mother of three (3) daughters, was with her children when they were all swept away. She was thrown against a tree, and her daughter **Mislove ROSICLAIRE**, aged fifteen (15), against a truck, which saved their lives. **Johny ROSICLAIRE**, **Kella's** husband, aged thirty-eight (38), managed to cling to an iron bar. In addition to losing their two daughters, **Lenchise** and **Keïcha ROSICLAIRE**, aged twelve (12) and three (3), **Kella** and **Johny** also lost all their possessions.
- **Aderose BRUNVILUS**, aged sixty-seven (67), mother of eight (8) children, was with her partner **Elismé JEAN PAUL** when he and their granddaughter **Stania JEAN PAUL** were swept away by the floodwaters. **Aderose** and their other granddaughter **Dorlencia CHARLES**, who were also present, survived by clinging to floating debris. In addition to the psychological pain caused by the loss of their loved ones, they both experience intense physical pain throughout their bodies.
- **Elisson MERCURE**, aged forty-seven (47), lived in Borne-Soldat with his two daughters, **Yvencia** and **Johana MERCURE**, aged three (3) and five (5), both of whom perished in the catastrophe. He also lost all of his belongings.

### *c) Situation in Other Departments of the Greater South*

9. In the Southeast Department, one (1) man in his seventies lost his life in Savanes Dubois, in the commune of Marigot. In Jacmel, the Route de l'Amitié was completely destroyed near Bassin Caïman. Gardens and entire plantations were wiped out. Sailing boats in both Jacmel and Marigot were carried out to sea. The Lakou Nouyòk beach was destroyed. The main roads

connecting Jacmel-Bainet, Bainet–Port-au-Prince, and Jacmel–Port-au-Prince have been cut off since Hurricane Melissa.

**10.** In the Nippes Department, the communes of Petite-Rivière de Nippes, Miragoâne, and Paillant were severely hit by Hurricane Melissa. At least one hundred and eight (108) families recorded by RNDDH lost everything they owned. For some, their homes and gardens were flooded, while others saw their roofs ripped off by the winds, exposing their belongings to the rain and destroying them. Among the heads of these affected families are many elderly individuals.

**11.** In the South Department, four (4) people lost their lives. Additionally, in Roche-à-Bateaux, the main road was cut off, isolating Tiburon from the rest of the department.

**12.** In the Grand'Anse Department, at least five (5) unidentified people drowned. Two (2) others were injured, one in the commune of Pestel and another in Anse d'Hainault. In Jérémie, all houses located near the seashore were destroyed. At least two (2) schools in Ganthier were demolished. Gardens were flooded. In Corail, Dame Marie, and Pestel, the situation is similar, houses and gardens are underwater. In Léon, the second section of Haute Voldrogue, some roads are nearly impassable, making transportation impossible. In Castillon, the area most severely hit by Hurricane Melissa, one hundred and forty (140) people were forced to take refuge in community schools.

### ***III. Subsequent Developments***

**13.** The majority of victims interviewed by RNDDH are currently dispersed among temporary shelters or staying with relatives. As of the publication of this report, they all complained that they had received no assistance from the State. They have since relied solely on the solidarity of fellow citizens and family members who have been helping them.

**14.** Furthermore, a delegation from the **Fonds d'Assistance Économique et Sociale** (FAES), the **Programme d'Identification Nationale** (PIN), and the **Direction de la Protection Civile** (DPC) traveled to Petit-Goâve just hours after the hurricane to assess the situation. RNDDH learned that the Haitian government intended to grant the modest sum of two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) gourdes to families who lost loved ones and to cover funeral expenses for the victims.

### ***IV. Comments and Recommendations***

**15.** During Hurricane Melissa, forty-three (43) people lost their lives, including twenty-five (25) in the single commune of Petit-Goâve. Thirteen (13) people remain missing, and twenty-one (21) were injured. Thirty-one (31) communes in the Greater South were flooded. Thousands of homes were damaged and/or completely destroyed. Today, nearly two thousand (2,000) people are living in shelters.

**16.** To begin with, RNDDH emphasizes that Hurricane Melissa did not directly strike Haiti but, as forecasted, mainly caused heavy rainfall. Nevertheless, certain preventive measures were adopted by state and civil protection authorities. One week before the hurricane, alerts were declared across the national territory at different levels. For some departments, the alert level was red, while for others it was orange or yellow, depending on their degree of exposure and vulnerability to rainfall, flooding, and landslides. A communication campaign was also launched to encourage citizens to adopt safety measures and, in some areas, to inform them of the locations of designated shelters. October 29, 2025, was declared a public holiday nationwide.

**17.** However, RNDDH regrets that the preventive measures adopted by the authorities to reduce the hurricane's impact consisted solely of communication efforts. These actions were therefore insufficient to prevent the disaster, as the loss of life and property has proven extremely severe. In this regard, RNDDH deplores the fact that no riverbeds were dredged, and no vulnerable communities, such as those in La Digue and Borne-Soldat, were relocated. The scale of communication surrounding the hurricane indicated that significant damage was expected. Consequently, it was the responsibility of state and civil protection authorities to relocate these at-risk populations. The preventive measures adopted were therefore superficial and entirely inadequate given the magnitude of the catastrophe that struck the country.

**18.** RNDDH interviewed the parents of twelve (12) children who died in the single commune of Petit-Goâve during Hurricane Melissa. They represent 48% of the total victims recorded nationwide. Eight (8) of them were between one (1) month and five (5) years old.

**19.** Among the adult victims documented by RNDDH, one (1) was eighty (80) years old, two (2) were seventy (70), and another was sixty-seven (67). A twenty-two (22)-year-old woman living with a motor disability was also among the deceased.

**20.** At this stage, RNDDH believes it is becoming increasingly dangerous for children and elderly persons to live in Haiti, as their exposure to risks—whether from armed violence or natural disasters—remains constant. Considering the vulnerability of the identified victims, whether due to the location of their homes, their age, or physical conditions, RNDDH asserts

that the authorities should have implemented timely relocation measures, which could have prevented these human losses.

**21.** RNDDH also denounces the excessive communication surrounding Hurricane Melissa, which began more than eight (8) days before its passage and ultimately reduced public vigilance. Some relatives of victims expressed confusion regarding the actual date when the hurricane's effects would be felt. Despite the intensity of the communication, RNDDH learned that the alert was not disseminated uniformly or simultaneously in all vulnerable communities. As a result, many victims were caught by surprise and had no opportunity to react.

**22.** RNDDH further learned that, following this avoidable disaster, state authorities plan to provide two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) gourdes to families of the deceased and to cover funeral costs. On this point, RNDDH reminds the Haitian State that human life has no price, and the State cannot decide arbitrarily when one life is worth more than another. RNDDH recalls that after the armed attack carried out by gang members on December 24, 2024, during the reopening ceremony of the State University Hospital of Haiti (HUEH), the relatives of the deceased victims each received one million (1,000,000) gourdes. Survivors received five hundred thousand (500,000) gourdes or more, depending on the medical care required. Today, RNDDH cannot understand why this amount has been drastically reduced, especially since in both cases, State responsibility is clearly established. Consequently, RNDDH demands equal treatment for the victims of Hurricane Melissa, which caused substantial human and material losses due to the State's demonstrated incompetence at the highest levels and the failures of Haiti's civil protection system.

**23.** Finally, RNDDH extends its sincere condolences to the families bereaved by the negligence of the State and makes the following recommendations to the authorities:

- Provide psychological, financial, and medical assistance to injured victims and relatives of the deceased;
- Ensure ongoing follow-up and support for survivors until their full rehabilitation;
- Compile a list of communities vulnerable to flooding and landslides, in order to relocate at-risk populations in advance when a disaster is forecast;
- Assist victims in ways that uphold their dignity;
- Implement, in collaboration with the victims themselves, recovery programs that address their specific needs.