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English translation (Unofficial)

Haitian interim authorities have 3 Fanmi Lavalas executives arrested inside a radio station where they had just participated to a political program

Port-au-Prince, October 2, 2004 (AHP)- Early Saturday evening, the National Police arrested without mandate three Fanmi Lavalas executives, two senators in office Yvon Feuillé and Louis Gérald Gilles and a former deputy, Rudy Hériveaux.

The policemen were accompanied by Judge Gabriel Ambroise as they made that arrest in the middle of the private station, Radio Caraïbe, after they had forced the institution's doors open.

It all started around 11 o'clock in the morning at the end of the program "Ranmasé" in which they had participated with two political leaders of the former opposition, Evans Paul and former Colonel Himmler Rébu. As they were getting ready to leave, dozens of policemen from all specialized corps of the PNH and civilians with war weapons surrounded the area around Radio Caraïbes and all the streets near by in order to arrest the 3 executives of the party of President Jean Bertrand Aristide who left the country under circumstances that are still unclear on February 29th

Director general of the station Patrick Moussigac and Mr. Paul and Mr. Rébu immediately protested against the interim authorities' decision. Patrick Moussigac declared that if such a reprehensible act was done inside his station, many people might think that the radio leaders had something to do with it. "How will the citizens trust the radio again when they are invited to participate to a program", he wondered, claiming that the three men's arrest will not take place inside his station.

Former Colonel Rébu claimed the same reasons, putting in evidence the clumsiness and rudeness of those who took such a decision. He explained that he saw nothing in the declarations made by the three executives during the program that could justify their arrest.

Meanwhile, negotiations continued with leaders of the interim government and sectors of the international community to try to stop what many already call a blunder.

In the first time, officials tried to explain that they wanted to arrest the three men because war weapons would have been found in the vehicle of one of them. But they forgot about that accusation after they were denounced by all those who were inside the station, including journalists of Radio Caraïbe who said it was a set-up. Indeed, the vehicle in question was brought in front of the radio by a police official.

The parliamentarians were then going to be accused of being responsible of the death of 3 or 4 policemen killed Thursday under circumstances that are still unclear. These murders were attributed to Lavalas activists. But the 3 parliamentarians pointed out that all the acts committed since the beginning of the week were part of a plan to put Lavalas out of the running.

Meanwhile, lawyers called by the Lavalas executives, Reynold Georges and Mario Joseph, denounced the government's practices and compared its actions to politician maneuvers.

Reynold Georges underlined that the interim government only made the political situation of the country more complicated with its incompetence and its immoderate thirst of revenge.

Meanwhile the police arrested a third lawyer, Axène Joseph, who had arrived at the station to give his assistance to the 3 Lavalas executives. The policemen did that to answer the cries of about ten individuals who demanded Mr. Joseph's arrest.

For his part, Secretary General of the PDCH, Me Osnerr Févry considered that extremists people who are part of the interim government are tracking the government itself. "Wanting to arrest well-known political men inside a radio station has never happen even in the most difficult moments for Aristide's government", Me Févry pointed out as he called the February 29th government to regain control of itself.

Around 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Judge Gabriel Ambroise gave an ultimatum to the officials of Radio Caraïbe, giving them 5 minutes to authorize the police to get into the station to do its job, otherwise he would not be responsible for what could happen after. Indeed, a few minutes later, the judge broke the locks, surrounding the station without a mandate with policemen and did his job.

These acts were committed in the presence of leaders of human rights organizations. A leader of a human right organization, Ronald Saint-Jean, pointed out that extremism has never reached such proportions in Haiti. He declared that the interim government's behavior predicts a dark future for the country.

Several other citizens who spent the entire day inside or in front of the building of Radio Caraïbe declared that the 3 political men's arrest inside the station where they had participated to a program is a serious violation to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Radio Caraïbe suspended its programs tonight as a "sign of protest" against the interim government's action.

The journalists of the station were particularly virulent towards Judge Gabriel Ambroise whom they called "the man of all the jobs".

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