Organizations’ attendees who spoke:

Nicole Phillips, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), Staff Attorney.

Mario Joseph from Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI),

Antonal Mortime from Plateforme des Organisations Haïtiennes des Droits Humains (POHDH),

Viles Alizar from Réseau National des droits humaine (RNDDH),

Jocelyne Colas Noel from la Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix (CE-JILAP), and

Charlot Jeudy from KOURAJ, Movement to defend LGBT rights,

(About 5 other organizations or representatives joined in.)

Nicole Phillips stated the organizations’ satisfaction at being able to share this call. They were calling from the Amnesty International offices in Geneva, where they were participating in the universal periodic review (UPR) regarding Haiti before the Human Rights Council, in regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

N. Phillips introduced herself, representing IJDH, partners with BAI in Haiti.

Antonal Mortime executive secretary of POHDH, and delegation coordinator, introduced the other members of the delegation present at this meeting, representing human rights and civil society organizations in Haiti at the 112th session of the Human Rights Council.

A. Mortime gave some background: Following adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Haiti adopted the ICCPR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

These covenants specify that each UN member state that adopts them should, one year after adoption, make a report to the UN presenting the measures taken to implement the covenants, describing how the rights laid out in the covenants are being protected and promoted.

Haiti ratified these texts in 1991, but has never presented its annual report because of the military coup against the democracy that took place in 1992. The Haitian human rights organizations have been lobbying very hard since the beginning in 2000 to present this report. The first report was finally submitted by the government in late 2013. In October 2014 the report was to be presented in Geneva in person. Human rights organizations in the country also have the right to submit parallel reports to the document submitted by the government, because it is not generally the government that will report human rights problems and violations. The Haitian government was represented by the Minister for Human rights and the struggle against extreme poverty, Ms. Rose Anne Auguste, accompanied by representatives of the judicial direction of the ministries of foreign affairs, the condition of women and women’s rights, and justice, as well as two representatives of the UN Permanent Mission to Haiti.

A two hour meeting was held to present this report earlier in the day. Five representatives of civil society were invited to address the floor, including the representatives of BAI, RNDDH, and POHDH. The HRC (Human Rights Council) asked many questions, which the government delegation had a hard time answering, but they did clarify a certain number of obscure points in the report.

An alternative report was signed by approximately 15 civil organizations, platforms and networks, addressing issues including corruption, impunity, Duvalier, assassinations that were not followed by arrests and trials, children’s rights, LGBT rights, forced evictions, and a reform of the justice system.

He invited questions to any of the delegates present.

- Brian Concannon from IJDH: Asked for more information regarding the government’s response to the HRC questions concerning JC Duvalier.

Mario Joseph (BAI): The government responded that they were going to pursue Duvalier, that there will be investigations. There is a lot of doubt as to what they will really do, and regarding the separation of powers under the current regime. But their response was that investigations would continue, as will the process of compensation for victims and their families.

N. Phillips emphasized that there were several questions from the HRC regarding impunity and also elections. She asked the delegation for their reactions to these issues.

Viles Alizar (RNDDH): We clearly told the HRC that we are very concerned regarding elections, because there have been no elections since 2010. This infringes on Haitians rights to vote, to be candidates and to participate in community organization. Municipal elections should have been held in 2010, elections to renew 1/3 of the senate in 2012. It is doubtful that the elections scheduled in 2014 to renew another 1/3 of the senate will take place. This would send the country into an exceptional situation in 2015 – that would automatically entail a rupture in democratic order. They insisted on this point to the HRC and called on their intervention to avoid this exceptional situation in 2015.

They also stressed that it is impossible to fight corruption and impunity until there exists a judicial system that is independent from the executive branch of the government.

- One caller asked if the Haitian government said what they are doing about elections.

It was emphasized that this will again be addressed on the following day. But this delegation stressed heavily to the HRC the need for them to submit recommendations to the Haitian government to hold election as soon as possible. It is essential that this issue be resolved before January 2, 2015.

- N. Philips asked Jocelyne Colas (CE-JILAP) what issues preoccupy her most, and why is she here in Geneva.

J. Colas responded that firstly, she is here to listen to the reports and comments made by all parties in this dialogue, and participate in the dialogue. She wants to hear the way in which various questions related to civil and political rights are treated, because not a lot of progress has been made in reality.

For example the situation of political prisoners in Haiti: Everyone knows that most of the prisoners (around 80%) are being held illegally, and the investigating judges have a large number of cases backed up. There is a complicated and dysfunctional system, which leaves a lot of prisoners waiting to be tried.

Another concern is the right to life: We all know that there are many victims of assassinations, and once again, though the government says they are going to pursue these cases and catch the perpetrators, this rarely happens in reality. As in most cases, what is written on paper doesn’t correspond to what is happening.

- Charlot Jeudy’s (KOURAJ) concerns as an advocate for LGBT rights were mainly related to the fact that over the last two years there has been an increase in phobia against members of this group, and KOURAJ wants to see what the government says they are doing to stop this rise. The increased phobia is provoked by fundamentalist religious sectors. The ministers stated that the government is very concerned with this problem, but we’ll see what actions are really implemented.

- N. Philips underlined that the HCR was very concerned about human rights advocates and posed a lot of questions to the government representatives on this issue.

In closing, M. Joseph (BAI) stressed that the HRC was well-informed and posed extremely pertinent questions. Hopefully the government took note of this, the civil society certainly did, and will continue work in its various organizations. He stressed that questions would continue on the following day, and thanked all those present on this conference call.

M. Joseph stressed that he attended the Prize ceremony the day before and was shocked by the story of the Chinese rights activist who was killed because the Chinese government didn’t want her to participate in the UPR of China. Human right advocates are often harassed in Haiti as well, and threatened. He called for vigilance, because the Haitian government is unfortunately on the defensive because they ratified a treaty that they don’t want to implement.

It was noted that people could follow the next committee session by webcam, and read the alternative reports on the various organization’s websites and on POHDH site, www.pohdh.org. N. Phillips underlined that both HCR sessions were recorded and those videos should be available. There will also be a press conference at BAI with POHDH and other organizations the following week. This will really be the opportunity for these organizations to share their information with the Haitian people. Questions can also be sent to nicole@ijdh.org and more information can be found on IJDH’s Twitter page: www.twitter.com/ijdh.