



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

Kermshlise Picard, Communications Coordinator, Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti; media@ijdh.org, 617-652-0876

## **Over 140 Haitian-American Groups and Leaders Warn Kerry: Going ahead with fraudulent elections in Haiti “a recipe for unrest”**

**Boston, January 19** - 43 Haitian-American diaspora organizations, 34 political, religious and community leaders, and 66 other individuals [wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry](#) today criticizing “the unhelpful role the State Department has been playing in Haiti’s election crisis” and calling for a change of U.S. policy. The letter demonstrates the deep concern felt by Haitian-Americans about this crucial issue for Haiti's future.

Going forward with the presidential runoff scheduled for January 24, as demanded by the U.S., “*is a recipe for further upheaval and unrest,*” the letter warns. Second-place presidential candidate Jude Célestin has declared that he will boycott the runoff vote against government-backed candidate Jovenel Moïse, in light of serious doubts raised about the credibility of the electoral results.

“Pushing forward heedlessly with elections on January 24 will only deepen Haiti's political crisis,” said City of North Miami Vice-Mayor Alix Desulme, one of the endorsers of the letter. “The country does not need another round of debilitating instability, it needs a legitimate government issued from fair and credible elections.”

Presidential, legislative and municipal elections held on August 9 and October 25 were marred by fraud and grave irregularities, which many claim favoured candidates close to President Michel Martelly. The letter states that U.S.-backed elections have produced “a fraudulent outcome, which disrespects the very idea of democracy and has led to the current impasse.” State Department officials in Haiti have publicly dismissed concerns about fraud and continue to press for the electoral cycle to be completed, the letter notes.

Among the 43 endorsing organizations, which come from diverse areas including 14 different states, are the National Alliance for the Advancement of Haitian Professionals (NAAHP), the Alliance of Haitian Professionals (AHP), the Haitian American Lawyers Association of New York (HALA-NY), and the Haitian American Lawyers Association of New Jersey (HALA-NJ).

The letter urges Secretary Kerry to change the State Department’s “proceed regardless” attitude and support an independent, Haitian-led investigation, as demanded by Haitian religious leaders and civil society, as well as the editors of the *Miami Herald* and the *New York Times*. “The current situation reminds me of the Haitian proverb, ‘*Two vit pa rive,*’ which means ‘if you move too quickly, you will not arrive at your destination,’” remarked HALA-NJ President Wilson Antoine. “Slowing down the electoral process to allow for a full and independent investigation into fraud is necessary, so that a solid foundation can be laid today for a strong and vibrant democratic government tomorrow.”

The letter also urges the U.S. to support the recommendations of a recently-appointed Evaluation Commission, which called for major changes to Haiti’s electoral council and the establishment of a political dialogue among the

relevant political actors. Meeting these “minimum conditions” for restoring faith in the electoral process must be made the top priority of U.S. policy in Haiti, the letter states, even if this means postponing the election or briefly appointing a transitional government.

“All too often, the U.S. has been eager to sacrifice democratic principles for the sake of an elusive ‘stability,’” said Pierre Imbert, former Director of the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants and an endorser of the letter. “We’re asking Secretary Kerry not to make this mistake again.”

“The time when the State Department could hand-pick a president for Haiti is over,” said Eugenia Charles, policy and communication director of the 1804 Institute. “Haitians want free and fair elections that will eventually free our country from systemic foreign domination.”

Individual endorsers include prominent Miami physician Dr. J. P. Austin, City of North Miami Councilman Philippe Bien-Aime, Florida Commissioner Mack Bernard, former Consul General of the Republic of Haiti in New York Harry Fouche, former City of North Miami Vice-Mayor Philippe Derose (the first Haitian-American elected to public office in the United States), Archdeacon J. Fritz Bazin of the Episcopal Diocese of South East Florida, Boston religious leader Pastor Dieufort Jean Fleurissant, and Brooklyn Pastor Reverend Mullery Jean-Pierre.

This is not the first time members of the Haitian diaspora in the U.S. have spoken out on Haiti’s electoral crisis. On December 2, a coalition of Haitian-American organizations [issued a statement](#) backing calls for an independent investigation, and on December 23, Haitian-American activists organized a Congressional [call-in day](#) asking the U.S. government to stop supporting Haiti’s violent and corrupt elections. In November, best-selling Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat published a [scathing critique](#) of Martelly’s elections and U.S. support for them in *The New Yorker* magazine. Congressional representatives [Frederica Wilson](#) (D-FL), [Alcee Hastings](#) (D-FL) and [Katherine Clark](#) (D-MA) have responded to their constituents’ appeals with letters to Secretary Kerry calling for free and fair elections in Haiti.

###