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Press Release

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The International Lawyers' Office condemns the political instrumentalization of the Haitian National Police (HNP) for the purpose of criminal repression against the Haitian masses demanding the departure of Jovenel Moise and a change of system.

In its primary mission to defend the rights of the most deprived, and those human rights which are inalienable, imprescriptible and inherent to all people – in particular those of the victims of cholera imported by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the women and girls victimized by rape and sexual assault, as well as the citizens victimized by State terrorism regarding the exercise of their public freedom and other abuses of law – the International Lawyers' Office (BAI) denounces the indiscriminate, murderous and systematic repression of Haitian National Police (HNP) officers against the Haitian people with the utmost rigour. Most notably, the BAI condemns the repression against young people in the working class neighbourhoods, who have been very active in the dynamics of national mobilization which has paralyzed the country for more than three weeks, demanding the departure of Jovenel Moise and systematic change.

The BAI notes with concern the sudden transformation of the HNP, under the illegal command of the Director General Normil Rameau, into an instrument of political repression working to keep Jovenel Moise in power at the cost of acts of massive violations of Human Rights, such as massacres, summary executions, beatings, illegal arrests and imprisonment, and excessive use of tear gas. This transformation of the HNP into a force of criminal repression against the civilian population is indignant, taking into account the many cases of assassinations and gunshot wounds it has caused among the civilian population, who are already living in conditions of socio-economic insecurity.

The BAI Civil Liberties Observatory has observed a situation of large-scale repression during these social protest movements. For example, on Monday, September 23, BAI lawyers released 6 young demonstrators who were arbitrarily arrested and then tortured at the Mirebalais police station for several hours. And a 62-year-old woman died of asphyxiation. BAI lawyers also released more than 50 demonstrators arbitrarily imprisoned at the Pétion-ville and Delmas police stations. These cases of human rights violations are only small clues to the full extent of repression.

Faced with this intolerable situation, the BAI once again warns of the repressive behaviour of the HNP, worthy of the **Militia of National Security Volunteers (VSN)**, the *Tonton Macoute* that massacred Haitians during the Duvalier period.

To this end, the BAI takes this opportunity to draw the public's attention to the fact that it participated in a **thematic hearing on corruption and civil liberties, held on Monday, September 23, 2019 in Washington D.C., under the auspices of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)**. On that occasion, the resigning Haitian government replied in evasive terms to questions put to it by the Commissioners, in particular those concerning the squandering of the Petrocaribe fund, the massacre at La Saline, and attacks on certain journalists and radio stations, the massive and systematic repression followed by extrajudicial executions of demonstrators, and sit-ins organised during the months of June to December 2018, as well as in February, June and September 2019, as part of protest movements aimed at forcing the embezzlers of the petro-caribbean fund to answer for their acts of corruption.

This hearing was requested by the BAI and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH); these two institutions testified, with supporting documents, before the IACHR on corruption and the various cases of human rights violations.

Unfortunately, the BAI notes that the acts of human rights violations will be put to an with the departure of Jovenel Moise. The Haitian people who have been continuously repressed by the de facto Moise-Lapin administration swear to only begin the process of systematic change with the resignation of Jovenel Moise.

In view of this political instrumentalization, which could lead to the collapse of the police institution, the BAI would like to remind Normil Rameau that the political mission of the HNP is not to deprive the Haitian people of their rights. Therefore, the BAI demands that the HNP comply with the Haitian Constitution thereby ensuring the safety of the demonstrators in accordance with its Article 31 and the International Conventions signed and ratified by the Haitian State.

Finally, the BAI once again welcomes the determination of the Haitian people who defy the repression of the phthk regime at the cost of blood, while wishing them good luck and courage in their protest movements. BAI lawyers will be present at the demonstrations on 4 October to observe the behaviour of HNP officers.

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