

February 20, 2025

Open Letter

To His Excellency Leslie VOLTAIRE

President of the Presidential Transitional Council

As organizations concerned with advancing human rights, justice, and prosperity in Haiti, we write to commend the Transitional Presidential Council (TPC) for its decision to [direct](#) the government to “take all necessary steps to investigate and prosecute . . . those who undermine the security and stability of Haiti,” focusing on foreign-sanctioned individuals. This can be an important step towards dismantling the forces destabilizing Haiti and rebuilding public trust. But meaningful progress [towards peace and democratic stability](#) in Haiti requires a sustained, programmatic focus on confronting gender-based violence (GBV). We therefore urge you to supplement the accountability measures announced on February 10 with targeted efforts to prevent sexual violence, provide survivors with care and services, and prosecute abusers.

Haiti’s women and girls are being [subjected](#) to some of the most [acute](#) sexual violence and other forms of GBV in the world. Although most cases are [not reported](#) due to fear of retaliation, stigma, and [lack of faith](#) in Haiti’s systems, reported cases nevertheless [number](#) in the [thousands](#). Some service providers have reported multiple months when they saw an average of [40 cases of rape every day](#) in their locations alone. According to the UN, sexual violence cases against children - mostly girls - increased by a stunning [1,000%](#) in 2024.

Equally stunning is the [absence](#) of [services and recourse](#) for survivors. Medical treatment, sexual health prophylaxis, shelter, and psychosocial support are [virtually nonexistent](#). [Impunity](#) for sexual crimes and other forms of GBV [is all but universal](#). Government failure to provide [security and effective protections](#) in displacement sites is making them [hotspots](#) for GBV, including [sexual exploitation and abuse](#) of desperate women and girls by those charged with distributing scarce humanitarian resources.

These abuses and government failures are not just grave violations of human rights that are ravaging the bodies and lives of Haitian women and girls, however. Armed groups [deliberately deploy](#) GBV as a [tool](#) for holding territory, punishing people standing up to them, extorting for funds that sustain them, and [recruiting](#) in a manner that [rips forced conscripts](#) from their communities. GBV is being used as a purposeful and insidious tactic for systematically [destabilizing communities](#) and wresting [territorial control](#) away from the Haitian state. Indeed, the UN Women, Peace, and Security Agenda [explicitly recognizes](#) that weaponized GBV exacerbates conflict and represents a threat to peace and security. Confronting GBV against Haiti’s women and girls is therefore indispensable for stabilizing and rebuilding Haiti and must become a central tenet of your security and accountability policies.

We note further that the foreign-sanctioned individuals you referred to in your February 10 statement must be prosecuted for GBV. In April 2021 the *Observatoire Haïtien des Crimes contre l’humanité* (OHCCCH) and Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic issued a report, [Asasina nan tout Enpinite: Masak ki jwenn benediksyon Leta an Ayiti](#), establishing that attacks against La Saline and other opposition neighborhoods that included vicious rapes were coordinated among armed group leaders and political leaders subsequently sanctioned

internationally. The report concluded that the rapes and other violence were sufficiently widespread, systematic and politically-motivated to constitute crimes against humanity.

To that end, we urge you to immediately undertake the following:

1. Direct the government to take all necessary steps to investigate and prosecute GBV-related crimes, including those for which internationally-sanctioned individuals bear responsibility;
2. Direct the government to prioritize GBV protections and responses in its policing practices, including by revitalizing specialized units trained in trauma-informed responses and investigations;
3. Direct the government to take all necessary steps to improve security in displacement sites in a gender-sensitive manner and implement policies for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse;
4. Prioritize budgetary allocations for services for GBV survivors, especially medical and psychological assistance, shelter, and materials needed for effective investigation and prosecution of GBV-related crimes;
5. Require trauma-informed collection of gender-disaggregated data, including especially with respect to crimes, humanitarian need, and civic engagement.

More generally, we urge the TPC to adopt the [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#), and to urgently implement its principles and recommendations into the transitional government's policies and activities. We especially draw your attention to your obligations under law to secure for the women and girls of Haiti the full enjoyment of their rights, including the rights to equality, non-discrimination, freedom from violence, full political participation, and access to justice and economic opportunities.

We further urge you to recall that centering women's leadership and specific needs is an established best practice for restoring security and democracy, reflecting an empirical [recognition](#) that when women are included, outcomes are more effective and sustainable. For that reason we call on you to ensure that you consider and address the specific needs of women and girls in every government activity and remind you of your constitutional obligation to ensure that at least 30% of all decision-making positions in your government and its instruments are secured for qualified women. We note with disappointment that, to date, the government of transition has [failed to meet its Constitutional obligations](#) in this regard, for example even regressing with respect to Ministerial appointments. We ask you to take immediate remedial action.

Respectfully and with great hope that you will take immediate action,

1. 100% FANM - SAN POU SAN FANM
2. 11th Department
3. 1804 Institute
4. Chans Alternativ/Alternative Chance
5. American Jewish World Service (AJWS)

6. Anana Consultants
7. Ansara Family Fund
8. Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI)
9. CAISO: Sex & Gender Justice
10. Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS)
11. Centre d'Education de Formation et de Développement Communautaire (CEFODEC)
12. Coalition des Associations des Femmes pour la Justice Sociale en Haiti (CAFJSH)
13. Collectif Haïti de France (CHF)
14. Commission Épiscopale Nationale Justice et Paix (CE-JILAP)
15. Community Coalition for Haiti (CCH)
16. Coordination Europe-Haïti (CoEH)
17. Diaspora Community Services (DCS)
18. Faith in Action International (FIA)
19. Fanm Deside
20. Fédération des Associations Régionales Haïtiennes de la Diaspora (FAREHD)
21. Femmes en Action Contre la Stigmatisation et la Discrimination Sexuelle (FACSDIS)
22. Fondation TOYA
23. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)
24. Groupe d'Appui au Développement et à la Démocratie (GRADE)
25. Groupe de Travail sur la Sécurité (GTS)
26. Haitian-American Foundation for Democracy (HAFFD)
27. Haitian Women's Collective (HWC)
28. Haiti School Project
29. Impact Communautaire pour le Développement d'Haïti (ICODEH)
30. Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)
31. International Civil Society Working Group for the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent (ICSWG PFPAD)
32. Kouraj
33. Li, Li, Li! Read
34. MADRE
35. Marijàn
36. Manifest Haiti
37. Massachusetts Action for Justice
38. Midnight Books
39. New England Human Rights Organization (NEHRO)
40. Nègès Mawon
41. Nou Pap Dòmi
42. Òganizasyon Feminis Dantò / Dantò Òganizasyon Feminis
43. Organisation des Femmes Solidaires (OFASO)
44. Organisation pour l'Émancipation des Femmes à travers l'Éducation (OEFE)
45. Organisation Trans d'Haïti (OTRAH)
46. P4H Global
47. Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH)
48. Plateforme des Organisations de Femmes Haïtiennes pour le Développement (POFHAD)
49. Quixote Center

50. Regroupement des Femmes Actives d'Haiti (RFAH)
51. Regroupement des Organisations de Femmes de Gressier et de Léogâne (ROFGL)
52. Roots of Development
53. Safety Advocacy Family Equity Jamaica
54. St. Joseph Worker Foundation, Inc.
55. Summits Education
56. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
57. We Are Women Org
58. Women's All Points Bulletin (WAPB)