

November 25, 2024

Mr. Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, Interim Prime Minister

Mr. Leslie Voltaire, President of the Transitional Presidential Council (TPC)

Re: Demand to respect the Constitutional and human rights of Haiti's women and girls by centering those rights in transitional government policies and appointments

Dear Sirs:

As feminist and human rights organizations, we write to denounce the ongoing failure of the transitional government to respect the legal rights of Haiti's women and girls. This violation of Haiti's Constitution and international law has the further impact of undermining efforts to restore lasting security and democratic governance in Haiti, as demonstrated with particularly brutal clarity in recent weeks. We demand immediate corrective action.

The transitional government is [failing](#) Haiti's women and girls in violation of its legal obligations. Sexual violence is widespread and being deployed by armed groups as a means of exerting and maintaining control. Along with other forms of gender-based violence, it "[has reached new peaks of brutality and scale](#)," [quintupling](#) in incidence just between the beginning of this year and March. Women and girls are also the [majority](#) of over 700,000 Haitians who have been displaced and face added risks of violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and abuse, and forced transactional sex while displaced. Distinct security, economic, and other needs of women and girls are [marginalized or ignored](#). Responsive government services are essentially nonexistent. The result, [according](#) to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is "irreversible harm for victims and survivors and destroying various generations."

While the transitional government took power in crisis, the situation has severely deteriorated under its watch, even as unaddressed corruption allegations and irresponsible infighting have ravaged its credibility and effectiveness. The undersigned organizations were concerned with precisely this outcome and for that reason in July issued a [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#), urging its immediate implementation by the transitional government and all actors supporting Haiti's transition. The principles we identified are simple; required by Haiti's Constitution and international law; and indispensable to an effective transition based on globally identified best practices. The [Framework](#) now has [over 160](#) institutional endorsements from Haiti and around the globe. It was presented to the transitional government, including the [Office of the Prime Minister](#) and the [Ministry on the Status of Women and Women's Rights](#). The OHCHR has subsequently [identified equivalent concerns and urged responsive action](#) mirroring the recommendations of the [Framework](#).

Yet this transitional government is [still not meeting](#) these obligations, even as sexual and other forms of gender-based violence [continue](#) to rise without adequate government response or resources and Haiti's transition teeters. The policy focus and dedicated leadership necessary to tackle these challenges have been missing. And more literally missing are women in leadership and decision-making positions who are dedicated to advancing the rights of women and girls

and safeguarding the transition, and are empowered to do so. Instead, the number of posts occupied by women have actually been reduced in the new cabinet to just 4 out of 18 – well below the Constitutional minimum of 30 percent. Notably, it is two of the more powerful ministries – the Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance – that no longer benefit from women’s leadership.

The transitional government must do better. As an initial action the Office of the Prime Minister and the Transitional Presidential Council must make a public commitment to the principles enumerated in the Framework and work to implement its [recommendations](#) and the [corresponding recommendations](#) issued by the OHCHR. It is likewise critical to establish a standing dialogue with organizations working to advance the rights of women in Haiti, including the [nearly 80](#) Haiti-based organizations that have endorsed the [Framework](#) alongside diaspora and global partners. And we demand that you undertake the following measures immediately:

1. The Office of the interim Prime Minister, the TPC, and every member of the transitional government – regardless of his or her sex – must center women’s rights and the distinct needs of Haitian women and girls across their activities. Particular focus should be given to prioritizing effective responses to the widespread sexual violence affecting women and girls, including sexual exploitation and abuse arising in situations of displacement and humanitarian relief.
2. Ensure that transitional institutions, policies, and programs – especially those charged with humanitarian relief, elections and the shaping of Haiti’s laws and institutions – specifically consider and serve to promote women’s rights across all their activities. These institutions include in particular the Provisional Electoral Council, the Commission on the Implementation of Criminal Reform, the National Conference, and the Commission on Truth, Justice, and Reparations, as well as the yet-to-be-formed National Security Council and Government Action Control Body. Factors that must be part of all planning and implementation include equal access and participation without discrimination based on sex; tackling laws and practices inconsistent with women’s rights as recognized by Haiti’s Constitution and international human rights treaty commitments; and preventing and addressing all other forms of gendered harms, like gendered political violence.
3. Ensure women’s full participation at every level of government and decision-making, as required by Haiti’s Constitution and international law obligations. At a minimum, this means that 30 percent of government positions at all levels must be occupied by qualified women – including in the cabinet.
4. Including women in leadership must actually embody a commitment to advancing women’s rights. This means, for example, (i) that any women in your government must be fully empowered to participate in decisions, to set priorities, and to deploy programs; and (ii) that women-focused initiatives, including the Ministry on the Status of Women and Women’s Rights, must be fully funded and oriented towards the priorities of Haiti’s feminist movement. Presence without vote, voice, and budget is not enough. Instead, the systematic, chronic failure to empower women’s leadership and decision-making

throughout the transition to date necessitates extraordinary, systematic, targeted efforts throughout all of government.

We demand that you take seriously your Constitutional and international law obligations to Haiti's women and girls. We further demand that you take seriously the principles embodied by the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, which hold that including women and centering women-specific considerations is a necessary and critical element of securing sustainable peace and effective democracy. The unrelenting expansion of insecurity, government dysfunction, and corruption of the past months would seem to illustrate this point. As such, the demands of this letter and the [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#) constitute a double imperative for your government. We urge you to undertake responsive action immediately.

Respectfully,

1. Advens Optical, Inc.
2. Association pour la Promotion de la Famille Haïtienne (PROFAMIL)
3. Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI)
4. CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice
5. Centre de Formation et de Développement Communautaire (CEFODEC)
6. Chans Alternativ
7. Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix (CE-JILAP)
8. Femmes en action contre la stigmatisation et la discrimination sexuelle (FACSDIS)
9. Faith In Action International - Haiti
10. Fédération des Associations Régionales Haïtiennes de la Diaspora (FAREHD)
11. Fondation TOYA
12. Groupe d'Appui au Développement et à la Démocratie (GRADE)
13. Groupe de Recherche en Appui à la Justice aux Droits Humains (GRAJUDH)
14. Impact Communautaire pour le Développement d'Haïti (ICODEH HAITI)
15. Initiative de la Société Civile
16. Konbit Peyizan Grandans (KPGA)
17. Kouraj
18. Marijàn
19. Nègès Mawon
20. Nou Pap Dòmi
21. Organisation Arc-en-ciel D'Haïti (ORAH)
22. Organisation des Femmes Solidaires (OFASO)
23. Òganizasyon Feminis Dantò / Dantò Òganizasyon Feminis
24. Organisation Trans d'Haïti (OTRAH)
25. Plateforme des Organisations de Femmes Haïtiennes pour le Développement (POFHAD)
26. Plateforme des Organisations Haïtiennes des Droits Humains (POHDH)

27. Regwoupman Fanm aktif (RFA)
28. Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH)
29. WE ARE WOMEN ORG

Organizations based in Haiti

30. American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
31. Anana Consultants
32. Ansara Family Fund
33. Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS)
34. Collectif Haïti de France (CHF)
35. Coordination Europe-Haïti (CoEH)
36. Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa Peace and Justice Office
37. Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
38. Family Action Network Movement (FANM)
39. Faith in New Jersey
40. Firedoll Foundation
41. Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA)
42. Haitian Ladies Network
43. Haitian Women's Collective (HWC)
44. Haiti School Project
45. Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH)
46. MADRE
47. Manifest Haiti
48. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
49. Massachusetts Action for Justice
50. New England Human Rights Organization (NEHRO)
51. Passionists International
52. POWER Interfaith
53. Quixote Center
54. Roots of Development
55. Stop au Chat Noir

Organizations from around the globe

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