

## TERRITORY OF HAITI

### Position of the Jesuits of Haiti in view of the current sociopolitical situation of the country

For the past five months our country has experienced a succession of sad events that point to a profound societal crisis. This affects every sector of the society and threatens to undermine the very foundations of the nation. We find ourselves today at a very real crossroads in the history of our people.

#### 1. Some signs of the crisis

There are numerous manifestations of the crisis:

##### a. *On the social level*

The problem of underemployment and of mass unemployment affects more than 60% of the economically active population, and with rampant inflation (14.1% annually) contributes to the growing impoverishment of large sectors of society. More than 25% of the total population lives in extreme poverty.

##### b. *On the economic level*

Chronic trade imbalance and the financing of public deficits by the Central Bank (Bank of the Republic of Haiti), etc., entail a clear and constant devaluation of the national currency (the gourde) and inflation. In short, we find ourselves facing an almost strangled economy, incapable of creating employment and benefiting only a miniscule part of the population.

##### c. *On the political level*

The Haitian state is facing a serious crisis of governance. It is essentially a failed state, eroded by corruption, prisoner to the tiny economic elite and is supported in many cases by organized crime in order to govern.

The political parties for their part are facing a real crisis of confidence. They are, for the large majority, sham parties, led by opportunists, wheeler-dealers, with generally no proper formation. In short, we see with sadness the phenomenon of the total discrediting of politics, evidenced by the high rate of absenteeism and the small turn-outs for candidates in electoral campaigns.

##### d. *On the cultural level*

We notice, not without pain, a collapse of values at all levels, a generalized crisis of authority. Corruption has become a culture unto itself, which infiltrates all social strata. Distrust poisons social relationships and egotism makes any collective success impossible.

#### 2. The position of different players in reaction to the crisis

- a. We see paradoxically a consensus among a large number of political and social players (political parties, media, churches, organizations for the defence of human rights, *petro-challengers*, the cultural sector, etc.) around the urgency of improving ethical standards in political life.
- b. There are many and divergent positions regarding the resolution of the political crisis. The opposition, calling itself “the popular democratic sector”, demands the resignation, pure and simple, of the Head of State. Others opt for a cabinet shuffle and the departure of the Prime Minister. Others are in favor of a national dialogue. For its part the government appeals for dialogue with the different actors and a disarmament of the armed gangs. The international sector, including the *Core Group* and the North American government, does not support the shut-down of the government, condemns the violence and calls for dialogue and respect for the democratic

process. Organizations of business leaders, such as the *Forum Economique*, some voices within the protesters, call for dialogue and reject the option of the resignation of the President of the Republic.

- c. Two main trends stand out: first, which is more of an institutional approach, stands on the side of dialogue, of social and political de-escalation. The second opts for the resignation of the President and of the government, and for the formation of an inclusive transitional government in anticipation of the “petro-caribe” process, the holding of a national conference and the organization of new elections. We are then facing a veritable polarization of the political scenario and the population is being held hostage.

The political opposition, despite its energy, is neither well organized nor popular. The government, on its side, is inept and more and more unpopular, vulnerable and discredited. We find ourselves in the end in an uncertain political situation of which the outcome is not predictable.

### 3. Our position as Jesuits (Society of Jesus) in the face of this reality

We, the Jesuits of Haiti, are deeply shocked and challenged by the great suffering of our people and particularly of the poorest, those who live on the fringes of history and who are always the victims. This sad situation of instability which society is living through unsettles our Jesuit and Christian conscience. We honour the memory of all those who have disappeared; we express our profound sympathy for all the grieving families and we manifest our sincere solidarity with the victims of the latest gratuitous violence. In keeping with our mission as Jesuits, which is the service of faith and the promotion of justice, we stand with the bishops of Haiti to denounce most forcefully the lawlessness, corruption and violence of the armed gangs who are tearing apart the social fabric. Contrary to the political practices that have been part of our society for a long time, we are certain that politics is a noble thing and, like Pope Francis, we believe that “*the mission of Christians is to restore dignity to politics.*”

Most of us are from here and we are in daily contact with the people in our various apostolic settings in many parts of the country, and we are witnesses to their fatigue with the interminable petty in-fighting among the leaders just to gain power and hang on to privileges. At this historic crossroads where our existence as a people is threatened, it is absolutely imperative that serious efforts be agreed upon by everyone so as to bring about lasting and viable solutions.

That is why we, the Jesuits of Haiti (The Society of Jesus), in a highly ecumenical spirit, rooted in the profound values of the Gospel and in complete communion with this suffering people, with the Church and with all men and women of good will here and abroad, who fight, one way or another, for the well-being of the Haitian people, solemnly declare the following:

1. We strongly call upon all those implicated in the current crisis to show selflessness and to prioritize the higher interests of the Haitian nation;
2. We appeal to all citizens of other nations, especially those in the more powerful countries on the planet, to stand in solidarity with Haiti through their organizations, communications, and any other means at their disposal;
3. While recognizing the structural violence of which the majority of the population have always been victims, we condemn with all our strength violence of any form as a means of resolving conflicts;

4. We urgently invite international actors, especially the *Core Group*, the government of the United States of America, International Organizations present in the country, etc., to become aware of their great responsibility in the tragedy that this people is experiencing and to accompany them sincerely, over and above strategic, commercial, and political interests, in the search for viable and lasting solutions and in the construction of a State of law;
5. We exhort business leaders and the major economic players in general to see the light and to make a firm, sincere and patriotic commitment to offering an effective contribution to building a more just, more equitable, and more prosperous Haitian society;
6. We invite those who hold high offices of the State, notably those with Executive Power, and especially the President of the Republic, Mr. Iovenel **MOÏSE**, the Prime Minister, Mr Jean Henri **CÉANT**, to listen with a patriotic spirit to the cries of the population, to be open to a sincere dialogue with all those who are the lifeblood of the nation, and to make decisions that align with the basic aspirations of this suffering people.
7. Finally, we appeal to the media moguls, to those who shape public opinion, especially to the ANMH, the AML, the AJH, etc., and to the state media, to exercise scrupulous respect for journalistic ethics with a view to effective citizen participation in the building of our democracy.

On behalf of the Jesuits of Haiti:

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