Global Unions appeal to stop the breakdown of democracy in Haiti

Global Unions Joint Statement

The dictatorship of the Duvaliers (1957-1986), one of the darkest chapters in the history of the Americas, was marked by thousands of disappearances, torture, summary executions, assassinations and many other crimes against humanity. Most Haitians thought that these days were long gone and that they would never see such atrocities ever again.

Fast forward to the present day and on 7 February 2021, according to the rules set by the Haitian Constitution, the presidential mandate of Jovenel Moïse expired. Contrary to the position held by trade unions, the Haitian Bar Association, senior legal experts, scholars, the churches and many other civil society groups, he decided to remain in power.

By all possible definitions, Moïse is a dictator. He has been ruling by decree for over a year as none of the lower house's 119 seats is occupied and only a third of its Senators have an elected mandate. Last month, he forced three Supreme Court judges into early retirement, including ordering the arrest of one them who dared to challenge his mandate extension.

Moïse is on course to seize even more power having recently called a referendum to reform the constitution and has announced his plans to call elections later in the year, which, under the current conditions, cannot be done freely or legitimately.

Following the tactics used by the Duvalier dynasty, Moïse set up his own version of the *Tonton Macoute* death squads to intimidate any dissent against his rule. He has been using criminal gangs and the police forces to carry out executions of political opponents and activists, crack down on protests, murder journalists and raid on the homes of opposition members, especially at night. Trade unionists are faced with systemic repression, with a wave of dismissals, arbitrary arrests and death threats targeting the few sectors where workers have been able to organise unions such as in education, the public sector and in Export Processing Zones.

The only support for Jovenel Moïse is currently coming from the so-called Core Group composed of the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Ambassadors of Brazil, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States of America, as well as the Special Representative of the Organization of American States (OAS).

The international community has been sitting on their hands while the working people of Haiti endure relentless abuses and hardship. Moïse has benefited from the support of the Core Group and feels empowered to continue ruling by force without fearing any consequences coming from abroad.

Only by breaking the silence at the international level will Haitian civil society be able to gather

strength to restore democracy. We call on our affiliated unions worldwide to urge the Core Group and other governments across the world to:

1. Withdraw immediately any support and assistance to Jovenel Moïse that could lead to fulfilling his dictatorial goals of a approving a new Constitution and his intention to hold undemocratic elections with an illegitimate Electoral Council;

2. To condemn any rollback of the Haitian people's human and trade union rights orchestrated by the Moïse regime.

We fully support the Haitian people in their efforts to restore democracy, the rule of law and respect for human and trade union rights, which are currently being put on hold by the self-proclaimed ruler of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse.

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