

# Founding of a Grassroots Human Rights Coalition in Haiti

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Port-au-Prince- On November 18, 2006 Haitian grassroots human rights organizations came together to found a coalition. CONODDH (National Coordination of Organizations Defending Human Rights) explains that it is a grouping of organizations all with deep experience working in the field of human rights.

CONODDH has declared its independence of any religious or political affiliation. The registered office of CONODDH is temporarily installed in Port-Au-Prince, but its seat can be transferred at any moment to any place in Haiti. At the November press conference CONODDH proposed activities both within the departments of Haiti and also outside Haiti to improve the domestic situation.

Its founding statute explains “the initiative to establish CONODDH was launched by the following organizations: GDP (Groupe de Defense des Droits des Prisonniers Politiques, or Political Prisoners Rights Defense Group); the BAI (Bureau des Avocats Internationaux, or Bureau of International Lawyers); FTS (Fondation Trente Septembre, or September 30 Foundation); the Collectif des Parents des Prisonniers Politiques (the Political Prisoners’ Families Collective); CREDHU/CTH, (Comite pour le Respect des Droits Humains de la Confederation es Travailleurs Haitiens, or Committee for the Respect of Human Rights of the Confederation of Haitian Works), GARDH (Groupe d’Action et de Recherche pour les Droits Humains, or Human Rights Action and Research Group)..” The various organizations will be providing inter-financing. Outside donorship will be accepted but only from organizations or individuals whose philosophy is compatible and in no case attempts to dictate the coalition’s conduct.

The inclusion of the CTH’s human rights committee within the organization provides significant strength to CONODDH, as CTH is one of the largest and most progressive unions in Haiti. The trade union came under severe repression following February 2004 when the interim government fired and persecuted thousands of civil sector workers. The aid embargo on Haiti, 2000-2004, meant to destabilize Haitian democracy harmed trade unionists across the country.

“What will bring CONODDH into the field of human rights in Haiti?” asked one reporter at the recent conference. CONODDH officials responded that Haiti is a country which has a population of between eight and nine million inhabitants and that in its history the majority of the population live in a situation where the most basic of human rights are deprived.

In spite of the goodwill of some governments which have succeeded in certain capacities and failed in others, there has been little widescale understanding of how to implement

basic rights for the great majority of the population. Years of dictatorships in Haiti violated the rights of the greatest majority of the population, particularly that which lives in the underprivileged districts. This population which has lived in misery for years, now has few services like drinking water, electricity, roads and suffers under poor environmental conditions.

Human rights organizations generally denounce the cases of violations but often are lacking in proposing solutions. A few elite oriented human rights groups, often cited by the corporate media and financed by Canada, France, and the United States have failed to investigate the 2004-2006 campaign of repression against poor communities. Some other human rights groups such as AUMODH and BAI have pushed for solutions. CONODDH forms a large scale coalition and aims to bring new blood into this field of human rights but particularly towards aiding the poorest, those without a voice. The overall objective of the CONODDH is to work for the promotion and the defense of human rights for all and throughout the extent of the entire Haitian territory.

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