

Growing Uprising Across Haiti to Demand Resignation of President Michel Martelly

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Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Global Research, October 29, 2014

[Haïti Liberté](#)

The uprising across Haiti to demand the resignation of President Michel Martelly grew again this week with massive marches in the capital and several towns on Oct. 26, 2014, the date on which Martelly had promised elections earlier this year.

As they had just nine days earlier on Oct. 17, tens of thousands of Haitians took to the streets again to demand the holding of elections, respect for the Constitution, and the continuation of the democratic process in Haiti. But for this to happen, there is a growing consensus around the demonstrators' principal demand: "Martelly must go!"

In addition to Port-au-Prince, demonstrators marched in Aux Cayes, Petit Goâve, and Cap Haïtien.

Parliamentary and municipal elections are more than three years overdue because of Martelly's bureaucratic foot-dragging and intransigence in naming a compromise electoral council. Nonetheless, Martelly has blamed his political opposition and the parliament for the delay and found the time and resources to hold three carnivals a year. The situation seems to confirm the old Haitian dictum: "Macoutes never hold elections" (Makout pa konn fè eleksyon), a reference to the repressive paramilitary Tonton Macoute force which was the armed expression of the Duvalier dictatorships.

Under pressure from the Haitian people, and his image-conscious backers in Washington, Martelly signed a presidential decree on Jun. 10, 2014 setting elections for Oct. 26, 2014. But in mid-August, Martelly's electoral council announced that the elections would be postponed indefinitely.

In a symbolic move, the people took to Haiti's streets in search of polling stations. Not finding any, they asked for the keys to the National Palace.

In the capital, the demonstration started at 10 am. Thousands gathered in front of the ruins of St. Jean Bosco, the church where Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide used to preach. The crowd then marched through the popular quarters of La Saline, St. Martin, and Bel Air before taking the Delmas Road. Peacefully, but with determination, the sea of demonstrators marched to Pétionville.

"We demand the immediate resignation of Martelly," chanted demonstrators. "Martelly is a vagabond. He should not be president of Haiti. He was imposed on us by the international community. No matter what, Martelly must go!"

Militants of the Dessalines Coordination party (KOD) carried signs that read: "Occupation =

Martelly! Martelly = Cholera!” Other signs said: “Martelly = a pink flea! Martelly symbolizes misery! Martelly = the colonists’ servant (restavèk kolon).”

Angry demonstrators tore down pink government posters proclaiming that “Ayiti ap vanse” (Haiti is moving ahead). Protestors burned and stamped on them.

Regime thugs tried to provoke the crowd into a confrontation at Delmas 18, but the Haitian police stopped the harassment. They had another agenda.

At Delmas 75, the police, accompanied by a justice of the peace with prepared warrants, arrested Thimoté Rony and Biron Odigé, the two leaders of the Patriotic Front for Respect of the Constitution (FOPARC). FOPARC was one of the principal march organizers. The two leaders were taken to the Pétion-ville police station and then transported to the Carrefour police station, in the south of the capital.

As news of the two leaders’ arrest spread through the crowd, the protestors’ strength and determination increased. It was resolved to head to Carrefour.



Thousands marched through the streets of Port-au-Prince on Oct. 26, 2014, demanding the resignation of President Michel Martelly.

Demonstrators arrived at Pétion-ville without too much difficulty and were greeted and joined by hundreds of people who swelled the crowd. After passing along various streets of swank town, the demonstrators headed towards the National Palace to demand the keys. But the police denied the marchers access to the Champ de Mars, the square in front of the National Palace. So the protestors headed down Rue Capois en route to Carrefour to bring solidarity to Biron Odigé and Thimoté Rony. However, at Rue Magloire Ambroise, as they did on Oct. 17, the police broke up the demonstration with tear gas and pepper water.

Haitians throughout the capital had quickly learned that the two arrested leaders were jailed at the Omega Prison in Carrefour. Within minutes, demonstrators were protesting outside, chanting “Down with Martelly,” even as thousands were wending their way down from Pétion-ville. When Sen. Moïse Jean-Charles, the charismatic leader of the anti-Martelly

movement, and lawyer André Michel arrived at the prison, the demonstration grew in size and volume. Moïse called for a “permanent mobilization” against the “emerging dictatorship.”

“The people do not want the tet kale (bald headed) group,” said Sen. Moïse. “Martelly has lost control of the situation.”

The next day, Oct. 27, Port-au-Prince prosecutor Kerson Darius Charles executed warrants of committal against the two leaders, who were not heard by a judge. They remain incarcerated in Carrefour’s Omega prison, where demonstrators will again protest on Oct. 30.

Along with Sen. Moïse Jean-Charles and Sen. John Joël Joseph, many political leaders marched in the protest including former parliamentarians Turneb Delpé and Serge Jean-Louis of the Patriotic Movement of the Democratic Opposition (MOPOD), Oxygène David and Thomas Jean Dieufaite of KOD, and Dr. Maryse Narcisse, the coordinator of the Lavalas Family party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Narcisse condemned the arrest and illegal imprisonment and Biron Odigé and Thimoté Rony, as well as three other demonstrators arrested in Aux Cayes. She called for the release of all Haitian political prisoners.

The list of demonstrators (now political prisoners) arrested during the Oct. 17 and Oct. 26 marches include the following: in Port-au-Prince, 1) Vladimir Pierre, 2) Jean-Henry Delassin, 3) Hérard Seradiou, 4) Moïse Roody, 5) Jean Jacques Renault, 6) Lovenson Mersier, 7) Paul Joanel, 8) Ralph Desilus, 9) Lormicile Isaac Homme, 10) Saint-Gourdain Dodelyn, 11) Mersier Jean Louiné, 12) Louiredant Louisvens, 13) Clergé Jeff, 14) Clervin Midin, 15) Sampeur Jonas, 16) Laguerre Angelot, 17) Fritzner Montinat, 18) Charles Altès, 19) Biron Odigé, and 20) Thimoté Rony. In Aux Cayes, 1) Frantzou Dieu, 2) Luxama Frantz, and 3) Mentor Pétuel.

Ten other demonstrators were arrested in Petit-Goâve, and three of them were released on Oct. 27: Guirand Auguste, St. Jean Harry, and Berthony St. Hilaire.

“Today, Haiti is returning into a totalitarian regime with a dictator without vision,” said Sen. François Annick Joseph of the Artibonite. “Faced with this regime, there must be popular uprising, an uprising of citizens.”

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