

Haiti: The Unsustainable Presidency

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If the parting of the Red Sea is one of the most dramatic episodes in the Old Testament, Haiti's Moses will not be saved by a miracle; on the contrary, he's about to drown the nation with the support of the US government.

"President Jovenel Moïse (Moses in English) promised to put "money in the pockets and food on the plates" (of the Haitian people) More than two years later, the food emergency has worsened and the famine is on our doorstep", states the day's editorial of Haiti's oldest daily newspaper, [Le Nouvelliste](#), on May 17th 2019. And it gets worse. The exchange rate has reached an unprecedented 90 gourdes for a dollar, inflation is at 17% - while some estimate that the real rate is around 20%. On February 14th, 2019, following violent protests against President Jovenel Moïse, the U.S. State Department issued a Level-4-Travel Advisory for Haiti - at its highest level of alert. Since then, there have been massive layoffs within the tourism sector and some import-export companies. The US decision exacerbated the asphyxiation of entire sectors of an economy already crippled by corruption. To make matters worse, attacks on life and property are increasing in cities and in the countryside. "We are at the antipodes of the tomorrows promised by President Jovenel Moïse" concludes [Le Nouvelliste](#).

For the past year, the disastrous management practices and the suspected diversion of nearly \$2 billion from the Petrocaribe fund under the presidency of **Michel Martelly** - endorsed by Hillary Clinton in 2012 - have been the core of the violent unrest in Haiti. While Martelly took the presidency with just 16.7 per cent of the electorate, the US press billed his victory as "overwhelming", reminds Al Jazeera. For the TV network, Martelly, "the friend of coup-plotters, fascists, and armed right-wing groups in his country and abroad" was "the second greatest disaster" for Haiti since the 2010 earthquake[1]. Yet, the U.S. supported him and still supports his successor, Jovenel Moïse.

Two years after the latter took power, the expressions of the collapse of the state are blatant. The Haitian Moses has neither the experience, nor the political will or the moral authority to make a change. The crisis is worsening by the day and last April, in a rare volte-face, the Haitian private sector made it clear:

"The system is finished. We must break it. We can prepare, order the rupture or we can undergo the rupture. This would mean that many of us will lose their heads. We will be decapitated. What we have will be burned", said [Frantz Bernard Craan](#)[2].

When this business leader speaks, he does so on behalf of the Haitian private sector. Indeed, Craan is the Coordinator of the Private Sector Economic Forum in Haiti -an

association regrouping all Haitian private sector corporative associations.

Amid Haiti's ongoing political and economic crisis and a month after his nomination, Haiti's new Prime Minister, **Jean-Michel Lapin** has yet to be ratified by Parliament. If he is, people generally doubt that he will be able to help Moïse face pressing problems such as the high cost of living and the insecurity that plagues the country.

On National Flag Day, May 18th, in Arcahaie, a small town where the flag was adopted, the Mayor gave a cold shower to the highest authorities of the country.

"People need hope, not promises. They want to live in safety. This is their cry. As long as the Haitian people complain, fearing for their future which seems more and more devastating, the flag remains stained and desecrated and you have understood nothing", slammed the **Mayor Rosemila Petit-Frère** to the president under the applause of an approving and somewhat stunned public.

She reminded members of Parliament that as long as they continue to impose ministers, overthrow governments and refuse to control the executive, they are themselves guilty of desecrating the flag.

"You, too, have not understood our bicolour. The people are following you, they have understood and taken notes", she said. "The wind of the division has unveiled everything. The press, the private sector, the public sector, the political opposition, all are concerned. This wind of division contributed to the devaluation of the gourde, it has increased misery, insecurity and instability", said the mayor who gave the proverbial keys of the city to the president, and with them an invitation to use her historic city as a site to start a national dialogue, as had done the heroes of independence 216 years before.

In his speech, president Moïse reiterated his intention to hold this dialogue while admitting that he was "*an accident of the system*". The problem is that the Haitian people no longer believes in Moïse's empty promises and it is improbable that it will be behind him when, in his accident, the raging waters of discontent and scorn drown him.

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Nancy Roc is an independent Canadian journalist with over 30 years of experience. Originally from Haiti, she is specialized in political analysis and her work has been published in many Canadian newspapers, such as *La Presse de Montreal*, *Le Devoir*, *Jobboom*, *Le Soleil* or *L'Actualité* magazine; as well as on websites, such as, *l'Observatoire des Ameriques*, *Gaiapresse.org* and *Alterpresse.org*. She has also collaborated numerous times as a political analyst with *Radio Canada* and *CBC News Canada*. Her other research topics' specializations are the environment, climate change, violence against women, women's empowering and autonomy.

Notes

[1] Greg Grandin " *Martelly: Haiti's second great disaster*", May 4th, 2011, Al Jazeera.

[2] Roberson Alphonse, *Craindre le pire pour le secteur privé*, Le Nouvelliste, April 13th, 2019.



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