

November 30, 1987
For Immediate Release

STATEMENT OF THE NDI INTERNATIONAL
OBSERVER DELEGATION ON THE ABORTED
HAITIAN ELECTION

The 30-person international delegation organized by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs observed an unprecedented event on November 29, 1987 in Haiti -- the cancellation of an election in progress because of rampant violence unleashed against peaceful, defenseless, determined and patriotic voters and election officials. The provisional Haitian government, the CNG, which took office promising to maintain order until a new government could be elected, failed in its self-proclaimed task.

The delegation, led by former Belize Prime Minister George Price and NDI President J. Brian Atwood, including party leaders from twelve countries, was invited to observe the November 29 Haitian elections by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) and by the CNG.

The President of the CNG, in a meeting on October 23, 1987, with former Prime Minister Price and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, welcomed the presence of observers for the elections. This welcoming of international observers by the Haitian Government was confirmed in writing by the Haitian Ambassador to the U.S. in a letter to NDI.

While Haitians assumed the primary responsibility for administering and monitoring the November 29 elections, the invitation to international election observers was consistent with established practice. Such election observer missions are common among the nations of the international community which are governed democratically.

The conclusions contained in this statement are based on the delegation's observations in Port-au-Prince, Gonaives, Jacmel and Les Cayes. Our attempts to observe the process in other regions were prevented when the Armed Forces refused to clear chartered aircraft to fly to remote areas.

On election day, the delegation observed numerous incidents of shooting at defenseless and innocent people on the streets of Port-au-Prince. Two groups of NDI observers were fired upon, with three shots hitting the vehicle of one of the groups. The delegation also heard reports of the many people who died as a result of the violence which prevailed in much of the country and which was clearly orchestrated to frustrate the voting process.

The delegation also observed for several hours an election process which was operating despite intimidation and adverse conditions. It observed large numbers of voters waiting in lines to cast their ballots with democratic fervor in the first free Haitian election in more than three decades. We observed exultant election officials arriving at polling places with election materials, having survived a night of gunfire, fire bombings and grenade attacks. We saw Haitians from across the political spectrum volunteering in order to make the election successful. Indeed, in one region, we observed the election officials and the armed forces working together, with the latter providing the security essential for the conduct of a peaceful election.

From its observations both before and on election day, the delegation is convinced that the Provisional Electoral Council did its utmost to meet its constitutional mandate. As the delegation expected, on election day we did observe some deficiencies in the process: there were some administrative difficulties but most problems resulted from the lack of cooperation provided by the CNG on security and other matters. In particular, the CNG failed to secure the roads and denied the CEP permission to use helicopters chartered by the CEP with the full knowledge and consent of the CNG. This prevented the distribution of election materials in several regions of Haiti. It is our view that the armed forces and the police tolerated and in some cases abetted the violence which disrupted the elections.

Despite all the adversities sustained in the period leading up to the elections, the Haitian people wanted to vote. They were deprived of this opportunity only when the CEP found it necessary at 9:00 a.m. on election day, but hours after polls had opened, to postpone the election to prevent the likelihood of further massacres. Based on our observations, we reject unequivocally the CNG's attempt to cast blame on the CEP for the failure of the elections; this was clearly caused by the violence which only the CNG was in a position to prevent.

As an international delegation, we commit ourselves to follow closely the situation in Haiti and to urge our governments to do all in their power to prevent the further loss of life and to ensure Haitians their right to freely choose their own Government. Haiti's neighbors and the Organization of American States, of which Haiti is a member state, have a major responsibility in this regard.

We will also urge our governments and our parties to consider the crisis facing Haiti as a matter of the utmost urgency.

Finally, we are confident that the people of Haiti will ultimately prevail in conducting a free, fair and peaceful election in the future. We commit ourselves to return to observe that event and to continued solidarity with the people of Haiti as they pursue their democratic aspirations.

MEMBERS OF THE NDI DELEGATION

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