

Garneau and Blinken Meet to Subvert Haitian Democracy

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After Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau and new US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held their first bilateral meeting Global Affairs’ [release](#) mentioned China, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba and... Haiti. The first four nations are all in the crosshairs of Washington and Ottawa. But Haiti’s de facto president is in the opposite position. Jovenel Moïse would fall quickly if the US and Canada withdrew their support.

What does it mean that a supposedly ‘unimportant’, impoverished, nation is the only non-enemy government mentioned by those in charge of US and Canadian diplomacy? Is it a recognition that their Haitian puppet might fall or is it a backhanded compliment to the anti-dictatorship movement? Or maybe it reflects the US and Canada’s commitment to credible elections?

On Sunday thousands marched against the dictatorship in Port-au-Prince. A week earlier 100,000 marched in the capital and thousands more protested in a half-dozen other cities. On February 14 nearly 100,000 also marched in Port-au-Prince.

Since Jovenel Moïse extended his mandate extra-constitutionally on February 7 there has been a wave of criticism against US and Canadian policy in Haiti. The country’s heterogeneous opposition have vociferously condemned the foreign powers. In the US there have been a number of rallies and online actions. A number of Democratic party senators and congresspeople have also [called](#) on the Biden administration to stop propping up Moïse. In Canada three current MPs and three former MPs, as well as Noam Chomsky, David Suzuki, Naomi Klein and 500 others, signed a letter criticizing Ottawa’s “[support](#) for a repressive, corrupt Haitian president devoid of constitutional legitimacy.” A coalition of 30 Haitian Canadian groups, as well as the Canadian Labour Congress and [Council of Global](#) Unions, have also expressed opposition to Canadian and US policy in Haiti.

Blinken and Garneau are undoubtedly feeling some pressure. At the same time, however, the situation on the ground is fluid and if they want Moïse to remain it is imperative to express their diplomatic backing.

The post Blinken/Garneau meeting release noted that the two discussed a desire “[to ensure](#)

the upcoming electoral process in Haiti is credible, inclusive and transparent.” But Haiti’s opposition has already rejected elections under Moïse, which few will consider “credible”. In the summer Moïse pushed out the entire electoral council and appointed a new one in contravention of the constitution.

The Canada-US position ensures the opposite of their stated aim. By supporting Moïse as he extends his mandate, rewrites the constitution, criminalizes protests, sets up a new intelligence agency, instigates a gang alliance to terrorize the slums, etc. they are guaranteeing that forthcoming elections won’t be credible. But concern for credibility has not been a defining feature of Ottawa and Washington’s response to Haitian elections over the past 20 years.

After Fanmi Lavalas won more than 70% of [7,000](#) mayoral, senatorial, etc. positions in 2000 the US and Canada undermined what OAS observers initially called “a great success”, probably Haiti’s most credible ever election. Realizing there was little chance Fanmi Lavalas would be defeated at the ballot box in the foreseeable future, they suddenly claimed the previously employed method to determine whether a runoff was to be held in a handful of Senate seats made the election “deeply flawed”. A few years later they overthrew all the elected officials.

After a two-year coup government repressed pro-democracy forces, the US and Canada financed elections that blocked the most popular political party from participating. On simple procedural grounds the election was also dubious. During the election in 2000 there were more than 10,000 registration centres and some [11,000](#) polling stations across the country. In 2006 the coup government reduced that number to [500](#) registration centres and a little more than 800 polling stations, even though they had some \$50 million to run the election (mostly from the US, Canada and France). In the poorest neighborhoods, where opposition to the coup was strongest, registration centres were few and far between.

At the [last minute](#) former president René Prével entered the race. The coup government sought to block Prével from winning in the first round and the head of the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections, chief electoral officer of Elections Canada Jean-Pierre Kingsley, [ardently](#) supported the effort. After an explosion of protest following the discovery of thousands of ballots burned in a dump, the US, French and Canadian ambassadors — who initially insisted the electoral council continue counting votes to force a second round — reluctantly [agreed](#) to negotiate with their counterparts from Brazil and Chile, as well as the UN and others to grant Prével a first-round victory. But they used the negotiation to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Prével’s mandate, even though he likely won [60%](#) of the vote.

Not viewing Prével as sufficiently compliant, the US and Canada pushed for presidential elections months after the devastating 2010 earthquake and amidst a deadly cholera outbreak. Following the first round of voting, Canadian and US officials forced the candidate whom Haiti’s electoral council had in second place, Jude Celestin, out of the runoff. According to the official results, Mirlande Manigat [received](#) 31% of the vote, Celestin 22% and Michel Martelly 21%. With no statistical rationale they removed votes from Celestin, who was allied with Prével, until Martelly was in second place.

Through Martelly’s term he [failed](#) to hold legislative elections and ruled by decree. That didn’t stop the US and Canada from supporting the corrupt and thuggish former Ton Ton

Macoute. After repeatedly postponing elections Martelly held a poll marred by fraud in 2015. A subsequent audit found that [92%](#) of polling place tally sheets had significant irregularities and 900,000 of the 1.5 million votes cast for president were from accredited poll observers who could vote at any voting station. Despite mass protests against Martelly's handpicked successor Moïse first round lead, the US and Canada [pushed](#) to move [forward](#) with the second round of the election as if the first round of voting was legitimate. Riots ultimately forced the cancellation of the second round. In a subsequent redo Moïse 'won' an election with few participating.

While the US and Canada claim to support democracy and fair elections in Haiti, history proves otherwise. In reality neither government seems to care about the wishes of ordinary Haitians.

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