

Mass Protests in Haiti: “Time for Haitians to Stop Taking Orders From Colonists”

By [Kim Ives](#)

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On Sep. 30, the 22nd anniversary of the 1991 coup d'état against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, tens of thousands of demonstrators poured into the streets of Port-au-Prince and Cap Haïtien to demand two things: “Martelly must go! MINUSTAH must go!”

Knowing this agenda, the day before over 100 delegates representing about two dozen different popular organizations from all of Haiti’s ten departments gathered at the Fany Villa Reception Center in Port-au-Prince to reflect on and debate a proposal on how to form a provisional government which could lead the country to free, fair, and sovereign elections after Martelly’s departure from power, which all of the delegates felt would be coming in the days ahead, one way or another.

The proposal was made by the Kòwòdinasyon Desalin or Dessalines Coordination (KOD), a new formation headed by several prominent veterans of Haiti’s democratic struggle over the past 25 years.

“We are sure that the U.S. Embassy has made its plans for what to do after the Haitian people have chased Martelly and [Prime Minister Laurent] Lamothe from power,” said one KOD leader, Yves Pierre-Louis, who is also *Haïti Liberté*’s Port-au Prince Bureau Chief. “The Haitian people also have to work out their plans so that Washington, Paris, and Ottawa don’t simply impose another puppet on Haiti, as they have done so often over the past two decades.”



Sen. Moïse Jean-Charles addressing delegates at the Popular Forum held on Sep. 29 in Port-au-Prince.



Popular Forum workshops discussed KOD's proposal for a provisional government for close to two hours.

The essence of KOD’s proposal is the formation of a 13 member Council of State which would lead the country with a judge drawn from Haiti’s Supreme Court. The Council of State’s members would be drawn from key sectors of Haitian society: peasant organizations,

popular organizations, political parties, non-aligned parties, women's organizations, unions, the business sector, vodou, Protestant, and Catholic sectors, students, young people, and civil society.

"The Council of State would sit down with the Supreme Court judge to find a democratic formula to name a government," the KOD proposal reads. "That government would put in place a democratic Provisional Electoral Council which would hold a general election in the country for all the empty posts in a time frame of no more than six months."

KOD proposed that Haiti should accept no international financing for those elections which comes with any strings attached. "We would not refuse" any solidarity offered from foreign nations, "but they cannot meddle in Haiti's internal affairs," the proposal reads. "They can give their support, but without any conditions."

In the same vein, the proposal calls on the 9,000 occupation troops of the UN Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) to leave the country immediately. "The last MINUSTAH soldier should leave the country no later than May 2014, just as [a Haitian] Senate resolution [passed in May] demands," said the proposal.

KOD works with a host of popular organizations which were also instrumental in organizing the Popular Forum such as the National Movement for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity of Haitians (MOLEGHAF), the Patriotic Force for Respect of the Constitution (FOPARK), the National Popular Platform (PNP), the Movement for the Survival of Haitian Society (MOSSOH), the Organization of Young Progressives of Avenue Poupier (OJPAP), Organization for National Progress (OPNA), the Great Space Reflection for Social Integration (GERES), the Awakened Militants for Another Haiti (MRH), and the Popular Assembly for Change in La Saline (RPCS).

Many organizations from Haiti's provinces also sent delegates to the Forum, including groups like the Organization of Young Patriots for the Development of Baradères (OPDB), the League of Progressive Youth from Grande Rivière du Nord, Pòt la from the Artibonite, and the Revolutionary Movement for the Development of the North West (MRDNO), and OPDSIC from the Grande Anse.

There were also international delegates who attended from the Guadeloupe Haiti Tour Committee and the International Support Haiti Network in the United States, and from the Travayè e Pèyizan (Workers and Peasants) organization in Guadeloupe. Messages of solidarity were also sent from unions and parties in Brazil and Argentina.

The meeting was chaired by two other KOD leaders, Oxygène David and Pierre Michaël, who kept the speeches moving at an efficient clip. FOPARK's Biwon Odigé, whose organization initiated the call for a massive march on Sep. 30, also shared the podium.

"Overall, the delegates welcomed and received well KOD's proposal which was presented at the beginning of the day," said another KOD leader, Mario Joseph, one of Haiti's most prominent human rights lawyers, at an Oct. 1 press conference at the Office of International Lawyers (BAI). "The delegates divided themselves into eight workshops which met for almost two hours to analyze the proposal. Afterwards, each workshop presented a summary of the delegates' reflections on how to reinforce and enrich the proposal. In the days ahead, a committee of synthesis will review the reports of each workshop to draw up a final resolution. All popular organizations who approve the final resolution can sign it, even if

there are some who were not able to participate in the Sep. 29 Popular Forum.”

Lawyer André Michel, who has been severely persecuted for bringing a corruption lawsuit against the Martelly government, also attended the Forum, as did outspoken Sen. Moïse Jean-Charles, who electrified the room with his address.

“Today we will try, even if we have only a little time, to bring a little light to the battle we are leading as political militants,” said Sen. Moïse. “We are clear about it: the international community has an agenda for Haiti. In 1990, we disrupted their plans and elected our own government. Seven months later, they carried out a bloody coup d’état. Since then, it is they who have imposed what they want in Haiti. This cannot continue. They imposed President Martelly on us. They imposed Laurent Lamothe on us.... It is we, the Haitian people, who have to take our destiny in hand. And that is what we are beginning to do here today.”

In concluding its proposal, KOD wrote that the Martelly administration along with the embassies of Washington, Paris, and Ottawa “will say that what we propose is not legal, is not acceptable.... But when the imperialists make a coup or an illegal election, even when the people reject it, they don’t care... What we propose is more democratic, more authentic, more honest and more sovereign than any of the maneuvers the imperialists have carried out in Haiti. It is time for the Haitian people to stop taking orders from the colonists. We have to construct our own democracy, because we are a nation, not a colony. We are our own masters.”

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