

## **PRESS RELEASE BY ANDRE M. APAID**

I am writing this note to ensure that my fellow citizens, colleagues, and friends understand my concerns about the press release issued by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Mélanie JOLY. The press release has included me in a list of sanctioned individuals accused of "human rights violations, including sexual violence".

First and foremost, I want to emphasize that I am a dedicated Haitian-American citizen who strongly supports a peaceful resolution to the severe crisis our country, Haiti, is facing. This position is well-known among political and civil society members.

Regarding the issue of disarming gangs, **almost all of Canada's ambassadors since 2004**, except for the current ambassador, Mr. Sébastien Carrière, whom I haven't had the opportunity to meet, have **witnessed** my efforts and contributions. This is also true for most ambassadors from friendly countries, as well as representatives of the United Nations and their staff. As a team, including human rights advocates, religious leaders, and credible and courageous individuals from civil society, we have made four attempts to persuade gangs to participate in a disarmament process.

One notable instance occurred in 2004 when, on my initiative, I held a negotiation at my office accompanied by the Minister of Justice, the Chief of Police, and two representatives of the United Nations. As a result, nine gang leaders agreed to unconditionally lay down ten weapons each in front of the police authorities as a first step (as reported in the newspaper LA NATION on February 17, 2004). Despite subsequent gang resurgences, we made three more attempts at the request of two police chiefs **who were aware of our previous efforts**. We were accompanied by the same human rights advocates, religious figures, and civil society representatives, with exchanges and encouragement from several ambassadors of the international community. Although we knew the chances of success were slim, we felt compelled to try given the dire situation our country was experiencing and the challenges faced by the National Police (PNH), such as the incidents in Village de Dieu in March 2021.

I want to firmly state that all our companies and my family have adhered to a strict and courageous policy of not providing money or goods to armed groups. This commitment came with enormous risks for our collaborators and my sons, and I am incredibly proud of their unwavering support.

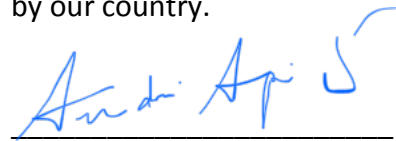
To all my compatriots, I want to reiterate that my commitment to removing weapons from the hands of our young people and organizing fair elections remains steadfast. Job creation has been my primary way of contributing, even though some have criticized me for not pursuing a political path. **I invite Minister Joly, as the representative of a country governed by the rule of law, to verify her sources and the facts. I categorically reject all accusations and suspicions of contributing to the climate of insecurity or corruption, as they are entirely incompatible with the types of jobs** we have been providing to our fellow compatriots for decades in collaboration with reputable Canadian and American companies.

As a businessman continuing a 71-year family tradition, we have worked tirelessly to create tens of thousands of jobs despite the serious challenges faced by our companies and collaborators in the industrial and agricultural sectors. These fragile industries are often the most affected by social unrest and instability.

Currently, we have initiated a significant agricultural project in the central plateau on land that originally belonged to the Déjoie family but was confiscated in 1957 and returned by the Haitian Government on March 25, 1986 (Moniteur no. 28). This project benefits local farmers and residents, and its positive impact will contribute significantly to the country by creating over 20,000 jobs in the next seven years. Our ongoing social efforts within this project include donating land to farmers, providing land to the town hall of St Michel de l'Attalaye for the establishment of a high school and a public market (funded by the World Bank), and opening a school of excellence in construction that plans to offer scholarships to 250 young people in the area.

The announcement of this incomprehensible measure by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs will harm the development of this project, the expected job opportunities and social initiatives, and further worsen the suffering of the most vulnerable.

However, with prayer and with the support of God, my family, and our collaborators, I will continue to fight and contribute so that justice and goodness prevail over the difficulties faced by our country.



André M. Apaid

Port-au-Prince, June 26, 2021