

Anse-à-Pitres March 6, 2024

Dear Sisters,

We want to share with you our present moment, since once again the news about Haiti is making the front page. It is sad to talk about this beautiful country, whether because of natural disasters, insecurity, vandalism or now because we are without someone to govern this country.

In the previous communication we shared with you that since September 2023 we have suffered the closing of the air, land, and sea borders with the Dominican Republic. This situation has permanently affected us and prevented us from carrying out some activities that we wished to have undertaken: the visit to close out the contract with the workers of the school of Balan, crossing the border to Pedernales (Dominican Republic) to stock up on groceries, gas and to be able to do it with our car, not being able to participate in-person in the Provincial Chapter in Puerto Rico. Also, one of our main objectives was the possibility of going to visit the places of our possible mission in Haiti. This has been impossible to do.

This border closure has also generated tension and many fewer job opportunities for the Haitian population that lives from commerce. This is the case with the merchant women who can neither buy nor sell their products, because the borders are closed. The deterioration of the country is in all areas, including the bad relationship with the neighboring country; the cases of malnourished children have increased, the displaced number in the thousands and the number of kidnapped, including people in religious life, is higher. And in this context of tensions rising, a former Haitian senator who was imprisoned in the United States for drug trafficking was released and began to raise the youth against the government of the Republic, with large demonstrations throughout the country.

While mentioning this, since the assassination of the Haitian president in 2021, there have been attempts to have elections for the new head of state. This has not been possible despite having tried to ask for help from the UN, neighboring countries, and with it the offer of a deployment of 1000 police from Kenya. Prime Minister Ariel Henry should have left his mandate on February 7 of this year, which is the date that the new government should start, but this has not been the case. He has continued to occupy this position and last February 29, he announced before the CARICOM (Caribbean Community) meeting that the elections for a new president would be in August 2025. This information provoked a wave of violence the likes of which have not been known in the history of the country.

Three days ago, the armed gangs of Port-au-Prince have united, attacked airplanes with passengers at the international airport, Toussaint Louverture, and released prisoners from the two largest penitentiaries of the Republic. All of this forced the

acting Prime Minister (replacing Ariel Henry) to decree a State of Emergency and a curfew in the western region, where the capital is located.

The situation in the country continues to worsen and the news is increasingly discouraging. Yesterday, President Ariel Henry could not land in the Dominican Republic. According to the news, he is in Puerto Rico and apparently will no longer be able to enter Haiti. On the other hand, the armed gangs yesterday released the prisoners of another prison of the country in the south (Jacmel), they attacked different establishments of the capital, banks, etc., and what is now known is that the country is completely taken over by the armed gangs.

We in Anse-à-Pitres have the privilege, for the moment, of being in a peaceful place where people carry out their activities normally, and can go to their workplaces. Schools continue to function without fear of violence and insecurity, but nevertheless, there is a lot of concern.

We are deeply grateful for God's care, but we are deeply pained by the situation of suffering, anguish, panic, death, desolation, helplessness, and lack of freedom that our people are experiencing. We are pained when Pali, the nutritionist at the dispensary whose wife is a police officer and is pregnant in Port-au-Prince, shares his pain with us. We hurt to hear of the workers of the Balan school who had to abandon their homes and all their belongings because of the armed gangs; the testimonies of the Daughters of Charity who are locked up, who hear the shootings, who cannot go out, like the great majority of the people of Port-au-Prince who have to be sheltered in their homes; We hurt with all the establishments that have closed and the streets that are deserted.

We are still here like the rest of the people with our activities, attentive to what is developing and in dialogue with the other religious congregations. We are sure that in case of any eventuality that may arise, we can cross the border to the Dominican Republic, which is only a few steps away from our house.

Dear sisters, we thank you for your prayers and ask you to continue praying for this precious country, that hope does not cloud life, that their strength and their great love for Papa Bondye (Father God) does not quench their faith and that they continue to be encouraged to believe that another Haiti is possible.

The Haitian community