Summary of Stakeholders’ submissions on Haiti*


I. Background

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21, taking into consideration the periodicity of the universal periodic review. It is a summary of 19 stakeholders’ submissions¹ to the universal periodic review, presented in a summarized manner owing to word-limit constraints.

II. Information provided by stakeholders

A. Scope of international obligations: and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies¹

2. The World Coalition urged Haiti to accede to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.⁴

3. La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) recommended that Haiti extend an invitation to a new independent expert on the situation of human rights and ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.⁵

4. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) reported that Haiti voted in favor of adopting the Treaty at the United Nations in New York in 2017, but has not yet signed the Treaty. Haiti maintained policies and practices that were compliant with all of the prohibitions in Article 1 of the Treaty, and can therefore sign and ratify it without making changes to existing practices or policies. ICAN recommended that Haiti signs and ratifies the Treaty as a matter of international urgency.⁶

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
B. National human rights framework

5. La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) recommended that Haiti reject the Senate bill on homosexual persons, finalize and adopt a family code, vote for a law prohibiting domestic labour by children and crack down on child abuse (see universal periodic review recommendations from the previous cycle).  

C. Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

1. Cross-cutting issues

   Development, the environment, and business and human rights

6. Just Atonement Inc. (JAI) reported that Haiti had signed the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (The Escazú Agreement) on September 27, 2018. The aim of the Escazú Agreement was to “guarantee the full and effective implementation of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process and access to justice in environmental matters.”

7. JAI recommended to Haiti to ratify this agreement and give it full legal effect. It also called for opportunities for Haitian civil society and local communities to engage in decision-making processes related to environmental matters, including the development of the mining industry. In this respect, the Draft Law related to mining should be redrafted. Civil society and community representatives should be consulted in order to ensure transparency, respect for human rights, and environmental protection. As part of decision-making processes, Haiti should consider the extent to which private partnerships perpetuate historical legacies of racism and colonialism.

2. Civil and political rights

   Right to life, liberty and security of person

8. La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) called for compliance with the legal provisions on arrests and investigations to identify and bring to justice all police officers who make arbitrary arrests and carry out summary executions and for the neutralization of armed groups through appropriate disarmament programmes.

9. Défenseurs Plus underscored that Haiti must assume its responsibility to protect all persons. That meant opening real investigations into cases of disappeared persons, putting in place strategies to stop kidnapping in Haiti and punishing the perpetrators of these crimes. Even more importantly, the State authorities must stop being complicit with the perpetrators of these crimes.

10. L’Organisation des Citoyens pour une Nouvelle Haïti (OCNH) called for urgent measures to ensure security and freedom of movement for all, to act decisively to dismantle gangs and prevent the formation of new armed groups and to control the borders to combat trafficking in weapons and ammunition.

   Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

11. La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) urged an end to impunity for accused persons in high-profile cases, notably the La Saline massacre and the killing of Monferrier Dorval. It encouraged the Ministry of Justice to develop an urgent plan to try all the prisoners who had spent more than two years in pretrial detention by 2022 and encouraged Parliament to adopt a new law to ensure that the judiciary was completely independent from the executive branch.

12. Combite pour la Paix et le Développement (CPD) recommended the punishment of police officers who refuse to enforce warrants against alleged perpetrators of rape or other
sexual assaults and of government commissioners who dismiss cases in which there is supporting evidence.18

13. The National Human Rights Defence Network (RNDDH) believed that due to the number of cases that stagnate at the level of the Justice and taking into account the numerous massacres and armed attacks that remain unpunished, the Haitian judiciary plays an important role in the establishment and persistence of the climate of insecurity in the country. The impunity that prevails in the country strengthens and reassures the offenders to the Law which makes that the Haitian judiciary actively participate in the process of trivialization of the rights to life and judicial guarantees of the Haitian people.19

14. L’Organisation des Citoyens pour une Nouvelle Haïti (OCNH) suggested strengthening the National Police so that it could end the terror caused by armed gangs and act on complaints and claims against police officers to identify and take protective measures against officers whose actions are not in line with the values promoted by the police as an institution. To that end, the justice system should be provided with the necessary resources to identify and punish the perpetrators of murder.20

15. The Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (“BAI”) and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (“IJDH”) highlighted that violence and threats directed at justice sector actors in circumstances suggesting political agendas further promote a sense in Haiti that the judiciary lacks independence. These include, for example, the recent assassination of Port-au-Prince Bar Association President, lawyer, and constitutional law scholar Monferrier Dorval, who had spoken out for reforms and criticized the government’s current rule by decree, and death threats against magistrate judge Wendell Coq.21

16. La Plateforme des Femmes Organisées pour le Développement de l’Artibonite (PLAFODA) noted that there is hardly any presence of specialized police officers from the National Prison Administration (APENA) at the civil prison of Gonaïves; only two administrative police officers are assigned to the prison. PLAFODA noted the lack of basic goods and services, such as water, both for the operation of the prison and for prisoners’ bodily hygiene, electricity, adequate beds and blankets, sanitary products for women, essential medical supplies and effective medicines and modern amenities in the rooms.22

17. PLAFODA therefore recommended that security at Gonaïves civil prison be reinforced and properly trained prison guards be assigned there. It requested the construction of a large prison in the municipality of Gonaïves, in line with international standards, the construction of a women’s prison in the department of Artibonite and follow-up and support for the 12 women prisoners who were gang raped at the Gonaïves civil prison.23

3. Economic, social and cultural rights

Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

18. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) reported that trade unionists were subjected to systematic repression, with a wave of lay-offs, arbitrary arrests and death threats in the few sectors in which workers had managed to organize, such as education, public services and free export zones. The authorities have not granted any new trade unions certification since 2018.24

19. While the country was facing the pandemic in 2020, the Government had adopted several decrees going against workers’ rights. In the free zones, it is becoming very difficult to organize.25

20. The roadblocks put in place by armed gangs make travel within the country extremely dangerous and difficult. Trade union leaders are no longer able to visit the provinces.26

21. In view of the deplorable situation in Haiti of workers’ rights, in particular the right to freedom of association, which is completely denied, the alarming persistence of child labour and the total lack of government action, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) recommended that the Government take immediate steps to remedy these blatant violations and abuses, in full consultation with representative trade unions. ITUC recommended that the Government restore the rule of law and take tangible, immediate and effective measures to put an end to the prevailing climate of violence and impunity in the
country and that it investigates the violent offences and acts committed against trade unionists and prosecute the perpetrators and instigators. The Government must take measures to effectively combat anti-union discrimination, including through frequent visits to businesses by the labour inspectorate and the application of more dissuasive penalties.27

Right to an adequate standard of living28

22. Helvetas Haiti and civil society organizations working on the subject of water, sanitation and hygiene recommended that an improved coordination mechanism be put in place so that the funding and implementation of projects by national and international actors are directed towards water reform and decentralization of the water sector in Haiti with a view to achieving a significant and measurable impact through a holistic approach.29

23. Haiti could thereby improve access to drinking water and sanitation services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and remote rural communities to eliminate any form of discrimination and ensure that all public places (markets, schools, bus stations, etc.) have well-maintained infrastructure meeting the specific needs of children, women and persons with disabilities and reduced mobility. In this vein, projects to meet strategic and operational needs, taking into consideration the specific and diverse needs of marginalized groups based on gender, and to ensure access to water and sanitation facilities for persons with disabilities should be envisaged.30

Right to health31

24. La Ligue Haïtienne des Droits de l’Homme suggested reducing the travel distance for access to health care by setting up health centres with beds in remote communal sections, adding missing services (maternity, paediatrics, laboratory, radiology, ambulance) to existing hospitals and health centres and providing hospitals with accessible facilities for persons with disabilities to improve their access to health care.32

25. It also encouraged the development of a more humane health-care workforce, so that doctors and support staff show humility and respect for their vocation, which would motivate them to keep to their working hours; patients should be referred to relevant and appropriate services and access to health care should be free of charge to make patient care effective.33

26. La Coalition des Organisations des Droits Humains de l’Artibonite (CODHA) recommended that Haiti should take account of the way in which health services are structured in its health policy and improve the governance of hospitals and health centres of the department of Artibonite so that health-care staff are always present. CODHA also mentioned looking at past epidemics such as the cholera epidemic to address new ones such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic by funding university research (including systematic reviews) and facilitating the application of this research to deal with future epidemics.34

27. Edmund Rice International reiterated recommendations made to Haiti during its previous UPR, namely to strengthen its public healthcare system and improve access to healthcare services, particularly for women, children and older persons; engage further efforts in protection of public health, namely to undertake systematic review of the health situation and to take all necessary measures in order to prevent and combat transmissible diseases and implement effective and best practices to increase patient access to healthcare.35

Right to education36

28. A coalition of Haitian and regional civil society organizations working on the right to education recommended that the education authorities develop strategies with the security forces to ensure that the grounds and the environment of all schools are permanently made safe, particularly those in areas considered dangerous. This entails having the security forces significantly increase the police presence on all streets, particularly in problem areas when the students are outside, namely the time when they are going to and from school, and providing all school students with a real transport service with secure buses capable of transporting the students between their homes and school.37
29. The coalition also encouraged Haiti to adopt, reinforce or expand legislative, judicial, administrative, social and educational measures to fully protect school and university students and everyone in the education community so that they may exercise their right to education peacefully, safely and free from any violence, including gender-based violence.38

30. The coalition called on the authorities to help and encourage girls to choose career paths traditionally seen as masculine, which would help them start working in promising economic sectors, and to adopt positive discrimination measures and incentives for parents to reduce the burden of housework on their daughters to enable them to focus more on their studies.39

4. Rights of specific persons or groups

Women40

31. The Bread of Hope Foundation (FPDE), Generation Justice (GENEJ), and the Center for the Support of People with Special Needs (CEPBES) recommended to work in full collaboration with national organizations for the defense of girls’ and women’s rights, in order to carry out public awareness campaigns on the importance and necessity of promoting gender equity, from the earliest age, for sustainable social development.41

32. La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) stressed that the issue of sexual and sexist violence against women and girls remains a major problem. There has been no major legislative reform since the 2005 decree on sexual assault. Between 2016 and 2020, the organization IDETTE observed many cases of sexual violence against women and girls in the department of Grande-Anse. In 2020, IDETTE documented 220 cases of violence against women and girls. Other sources documented 300 cases in the district of Croix-des-Bouquets between January 2018 and March 2021 and 196 cases in Saint-Marc. Cases are also on the rise in the country’s other departments.42

33. However, despite the tightening of the law on sexual assault, judicial responses remain very tentative.43

34. Combite pour la Paix et le Développement (CPD) referred to the Spotlight Initiative in Haiti, which, in October 2020, stated that more than one in three women report having suffered violence from their partner, husband or fiancé. Twenty-nine per cent of women of childbearing age have suffered physical violence – in 45 per cent of cases, from their intimate partner. Thirty-four per cent of women living with a partner are survivors of domestic violence, and, in 37 per cent of cases, this violence has caused serious injury. Twelve per cent of Haitian women have already suffered sexual violence; a quarter of them are girls aged 15 to 17. In addition, 31 per cent of women also suffer or are exposed to several types of violence and emotional abuse, including extreme jealousy, isolation from contact with friends and family and the checking of every movement, with the ultimate aim of exercising control over them.44

Children45

35. The Bread of Hope Foundation (FPDE), Generation Justice (GENEJ), and the Center for the Support of People with Special Needs (CEPBES) recommended that Haiti readapts the Free and Compulsory Universal Schooling Program (PSUGO) to the needs of the most disadvantaged children, by putting in place mechanisms to monitor and follow up on the various program activities and adopt other programs that will enable disadvantaged children, especially those in rural areas, to enjoy the right to education as recommended in the previous UPR cycle.46

36. They also urged to invest in the training of qualified teachers, able to educate children with special needs and promote the creation of books and other didactic and pedagogical materials adapted to the instruction of these children.47

37. They encouraged the creation of reception centers specifically for street children in the country's major cities, and establish mechanisms to prevent and mitigate the risks of sexual abuse and exploitation of minors.48
38. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) reported that while approximately 30,000 children live in orphanages in Haiti, the government estimates that 80% of the children have at least one living parent. Although this may appear strange, poverty-stricken parents often send their children to orphanages when they believe that have too little resources to provide for them. Unfortunately, those who run the orphanages often exploit the children and deceive well-meaning foreigners to obtain financial support.50

39. The former president of the National Committee Against Human Trafficking stated that, “they are forced into labor. And they’re allowed to live in squalor so that foreigners will give them money out of pity”. Children rarely see the benefits of money given to these orphanages. However, for orphanage owners, it is a money-making business. Foreign non-profits give approximately $100 million each year to orphanages in Haiti. To ensure that the funds continue to flow, orphanage owners engage in manipulative tactics to harvest children from their families. Orphanages pay people called ‘child finders’ who go out into the community and essentially put pressure on parents to give them their children. They will tell parents, ‘you are poor, you can’t afford your child’s education. Give them to the orphanage. We will make sure they have an education, have healthcare, have opportunities that you could never give them.’50

40. Haitian children are also exploited through the practice of “restavek”. Unlike children who are exploited by orphanages, restaveks are children who serve as unpaid domestic servants. To find children, women from urban areas will approach poorer women who transport goods to the market and ask if they have children who are available to “help around the house”. In reality, these women serve as intermediaries between poor, vulnerable families and host families. Host families force these children to perform laborious tasks often for 14 hours a day, and the children receive no pay or education. Living in squalor, they are forced to sleep on concrete floors, dress in rags, and submit to verbal and physical abuse.51

41. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children informed that corporal punishment of children in Haiti was lawful in the home. Prohibition in alternative care settings and day care required confirmation. There was no identified confirmation of a “right” of parents to punish or discipline children in criminal or civil law, but there appears to be some confusion as to whether the 2001 law prohibiting corporal punishment was applicable within the family home. The near universal acceptance of violence in childrearing necessitated clarity in law that all corporal punishment is prohibited, however light, including in the family home. Explicit prohibition of corporal punishment by parents should be enacted.52

42. L‘Organisation des Enfants Chrétiens Haïtiens called on the Committee to recommend that the State party establish social rehabilitation centres for juveniles, significantly decrease the duration of pretrial detention and ensure that juveniles in detention centres and prisons are placed in separate areas. It called for the establishment of one juvenile court per judicial district, which would facilitate the rapid handling of cases involving children. Some preventive measures could be taken during the investigation, but no provision should be made for pretrial detention in any case. If there is sufficient evidence of a criminal offence, the case should be referred to a juvenile court. The courts dealing with minors in conflict with the law should prioritize measures aimed at the protection or correctional education of the young person, remedial measures such as placement in a psychiatric or child guidance centre, social rehabilitation measures, or therapeutic measures such as treatment in a State remedial education centre or in a specialized vocational training centre.53

Notes

1 The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: www.ohchr.org. (One asterisk denotes a national human rights institution with “A” status).

Civil society

Individual submissions:

COPAD Comité pour la Paix et le Développement Cité Soleil, Haiti;
Defenseurs Plus Port au Prince, Haiti;
ECLJ The European Centre for Law and Justice, Strasbourg, France;
ICAN International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Geneva, Switzerland;
ITUC International Trade Union Confederation Brussels, Belgium
JAI Just Atonement Inc, United States;
OCNH Organisation de Citoyens pour une nouvelle Haiti, Haiti;
OECH /Artibonite Organisation des Enfants Chrétiens Haitiens, Haiti;
PLAFODA Plateforme de Femmes organisées par le développement de l’Artibonite, Haiti;
WCAP World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Montreuil France.

Joint submissions:
JS1 Joint submission 1 submitted by: Fondation Pain d’Espoir (Bread of Hope Foundation), Génération Justice (GENEJ), Centre d’Encadrement des Personnes à Besoins Spéciaux (Center for the Care of Persons with Special Needs), Haiti;
JS2 Joint submission 2 submitted by: La Coalition des Organisations des Droits Humains de l’Artibonite (CODHA), Haiti;
JS3 Joint submission 3 submitted by: La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU), Haiti;
JS4 Joint submission 4 submitted by: Global Partnership to end violence, New York, USA;
JS5 Joint submission 5 submitted by: Edmund Rice International Geneva, Switzerland;
JS6 Joint Submission 6 submitted by: REPT-CLADE, Port au Prince, Haiti;
JS7 Joint Submission 7 submitted by: HELVETAS, Zurich, Switzerland;
JS8 Joint submission 8 submitted by: The Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (“BAI”) and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (“IJDH”), USA and Haiti;

2 The following abbreviations are used in UPR documents:
ICERD International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
ICESCR International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
OP-ICESCR Optional Protocol to ICESCR;
ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
ICCPR-OP 1 Optional Protocol to ICCPR;
ICCPR-OP 2 Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
OP-CEDAW Optional Protocol to CEDAW;
CAT Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
OP-CAT Optional Protocol to CAT;
CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child;
OP-CRC-AC Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict;
OP-CRC-SC Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
OP-CRC-IC Optional Protocol to CRC on a communications procedure;
ICRMW International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
OP-CRPD Optional Protocol to CRPD;
ICPPED International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
3 For the relevant recommendations, see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.1–115.24, 116.1, 116.2 and 117.1–117.22.
4 World Coalition Against the Death Penalty submission.
5 La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) – JS3 page 10.
6 The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).
8 La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) – JS3 page 6.
9 For the relevant recommendations, see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.165–115.175.
10 Just Atonement Inc. (JAI) submission page 7.
11 Just Atonement Inc. (JAI) submission page 7.
12 For the relevant recommendations, see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.110–115.115.
15 L’Organisation des Citoyens pour une Nouvelle Haïti (OCNH) page 5.
16 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.72–115.115.81, 115.116–115.126.
17 La Coalition des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains pour l’EPU (COHADH-EPU) – JS 3 page 7.
18 Comité pour la Paix et le Développement (CPD) page 6.
19 RNDDH submission para 136.
20 L’Organisation des Citoyens pour une Nouvelle Haïti (OCNH), page 4.
22 Rapport d’Enquête de la Plate-forme des Femmes Organisées pour le Développement de l’Artibonite (PLAFODA).
23 Rapport d’Enquête de la Plate-forme des Femmes Organisées pour le Développement de l’Artibonite (PLAFODA).
26 Rapport de la Confédération Syndicale Internationale (CSI).
28 For the relevant recommendations, see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.145–115.152.
29 Helvetas Haïti et avec des Organisations de la Société Civile (OSC) travaillant sur la thématique de l’eau, assainissement et hygiène (WASH), JS7 para 28.
30 Helvetas Haïti et avec des Organisations de la Société Civile (OSC) travaillant sur la thématique de l’eau, assainissement et hygiène (WASH), JS 7 paras 30–32.
31 For the relevant recommendations, see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.153–115.155.
34 La Coalition des Organisations des Droits Humains de l’Artibonite (CODHA), JS2 page 8.
35 Edmund Rice International submission – JS5.
36 For the relevant recommendations, see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.156–115.162.
37 La coalition d’organisations haïtiennes et régionales de la société civile sur la situation du droit à l’éducation, JS 6 paras 40–43.
38 La coalition d’organisations haïtiennes et régionales de la société civile sur la situation du droit à l’éducation, JS 6 para 44.
39 La coalition d’organisations haïtiennes et régionales de la société civile sur la situation du droit à l’éducation, JS 6 para 30.
40 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.82–115.97.
41 Fondation Pain d’Espoir (Bread of Hope Foundation), Génération Justice (GENEJ), Centre d’Encadrement des Personnes à Besoins Spéciaux (Center for the Care of Persons with Special Needs) – JS1, pages 5–6.
42 La Coalition des Organisations des Droits Humains de l’Artibonite (CODHA), JS2 page 7.
43 La Coalition des Organisations des Droits Humains de l’Artibonite (CODHA), JS2 page 7.
44 Comité pour la Paix et le Développement (CPD) page 3.
45 For relevant recommendations see A/HRC/34/14, paras. 115.98–115.109.
46 Fondation Pain d’Espoir (Bread of Hope Foundation), Génération Justice (GENEJ), Centre d’Encadrement des Personnes à Besoins Spéciaux (Center for the Care of Persons with Special Needs) – JS1, page 4.
47 Fondation Pain d’Espoir (Bread of Hope Foundation), Génération Justice (GENEJ), Centre d’Encadrement des Personnes à Besoins Spéciaux (Center for the Care of Persons with Special Needs) – JS1, page 5.
48 Fondation Pain d’Espoir (Bread of Hope Foundation), Génération Justice (GENEJ), Centre d’Encadrement des Personnes à Besoins Spéciaux (Center for the Care of Persons with Special Needs) – JS1, pages 7 and 9.
49 European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), paras 11–14.
50 European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), paras 11–14.
51 European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ), paras 11–14.
52 Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, JS4 page 2.
53 Rapport présenté par l’Organisation des Enfants Chrétiens Haïtiens (OECH), page 5.