

News Release

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MR. CLARK COMMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN HAÏTI

"Canada deeply regrets the decision of the Haïtian Government to declare a state of siege in Haïti, particularly since this decision of the Haïtian Government could call into question the holding of the general elections scheduled for later this year."

This was the reaction today of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, to the arrests of a large number of Haïtian political figures following the announcement on Saturday of the state of siege.

"This action could amount to a significant setback for the process of encouraging, as quickly as possible, the development of truly democratic institutions - a process for which the Haïtian Government has repeatedly declared their commitment", stated Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark was also very concerned by reports indicating that some of the individuals arrested by the Haïtian authorities had been maltreated. The Minister has asked the Canadian ambassador in Port-au-Prince to investigate the matter fully and to emphasize to the Haïtian authorities Canada's expectations that democratic rights be respected. He found particularly deplorable the suspension of constitutional provisions protecting Haïtian citizens against arrest and deportation.

Canada has already suspended all consultations with Haïti on government-to-government assistance following a series of tragic incidents which took place in September 1988. Since then, all Canadian aid to Haïti has been channelled through non-governmental and multilateral organizations.