

The Minister for External Relations, the Honourable Monique Vézina, has issued the following statement with respect to the situation in Haïti.

«The Canadian government remains preoccupied by the situation in Haïti. Widespread demonstrations by the people of Haïti against the present government have precipitated the present state of siege and atmosphere of tension within the country. It is not difficult to understand why an impoverished people has demonstrated its dissatisfaction with the performance of this government. We share that concern. We are distressed that the government has refused to take action to prevent the undisciplined acts of abuse and violence perpetrated by the militia.

Canada's present major concern about Haïti is with the welfare and human rights of the Haïtian people and the safety of the more than 2,000 Canadians who are resident in that country. The safety of Canadians is being monitored closely by our embassy and at present there are no indications that they are in any immediate danger.

Canada is not suspending its aid to Haïti. This decision is not related to our views about the present government in Haïti but solely to the urgent and continuing need of the Haïtian people for our assistance. Haïti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. It is a country where Canadians from the religious and voluntary sectors have been active for many years».