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President Jovenel Moise Assassinated at His Home; CARICOM Leaders Call Urgent Meeting

Caribbean / **Published On July 07, 2021 09:05 AM /**

Staff Consortium **July 07, 2021**

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PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti, CMC – Haiti President Jovenel Moise was shot and killed at his home by gunmen that included foreign elements, outgoing Prime Minister Claude Joseph has announced.

Moise's wife was also injured during the incident on Wednesday and has been hospitalized.

Joseph has called on the population for calm and indicated that the police and the army would maintain order.

“It is with great sadness that we confirm the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, during an attack on his residence by mercenaries. The First Lady, injured, receives the necessary care. Our

hearts go out to the presidential family and to the whole nation," according to an official statement.

According to the official statement, the attack on Moise took place at 1:00 a.m. Wednesday.

It said that "a group of unidentified individuals, some of whom spoke in Spanish, attacked the private residence of the President of the Republic and thus mortally wounded the Head of State. Wounded by gunshot, the First Lady takes the care that her case requires."

Joseph described the assassination as "an odious, inhuman and barbaric act," and that the security situation in the country is under the control of the Haitian National Police and the Haitian Armed Forces.

"All measures are taken to guarantee the continuity of the State and protect the nation, democracy and the Republic will win," Joseph added.

CARICOM Leaders to Meet

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders will meet later on Wednesday following the assassination of Moise, CARICOM chairman Gaston Browne has said.

Browne, the Antigua and Barbuda prime minister, told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that he was in shock at the developments, adding "that's very very, unfortunate."

"I am shocked to hear about the assassination of President Moise and I pray the full recovery of his wife, who is reported to be hospitalized with bullet wound," said Browne, adding "the savageous act is a very unfortunate development coming at a time of great instability to Haiti."

"I hope the prime minister and other members of the cabinet will be able to hold things together to prevent further chaos and confusion," Browne told CMC.

"I will be convening a meeting of heads later today to discuss this latest development," said Browne, who up until Tuesday night had chaired the annual summit of regional leaders where the situation in the French-speaking CARICOM country had been discussed.

Browne had told reporters following the summit that the leaders had agreed to issue a statement on the ongoing political and economic crisis in Haiti after receiving a report on the situation in that country from the Expert Group which had been established by CARICOM leaders in February 2021.

The outgoing Haitian Prime Minister Claude Joseph confirmed the assassination.

Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, speaking on the state-owned DBS Radio, said Haiti has been embroiled in "some security and political challenges for a long time, but most specifically over the last year or so with the postponement of elections and people demanding elections."

"CARICOM has sought to intervene in the matter and of course we just concluded our heads of government meeting yesterday and we spent a considerable amount of time discussing the Haitian situation," he added.

Skerrit said that regional leaders had spoken to the authorities in Haiti, "but it is rather unfortunate that it has descended into the assassination of President Moise."

Haiti is facing a constitutional crisis with many Haitians saying they no longer recognize Moïse because they believe his term expired on February 7 under the current constitution.

Late last month, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) announced plans to stage the constitutional referendum as well as the legislative elections for the Senate and Deputy on Sunday September 26.

Haiti had earlier announced the postponement of the constitutional referendum that was originally scheduled for June 27.

The referendum has been criticized by the opposition parties that claimed it had been unilaterally proposed by Moïse with the head of state indicating that the referendum was necessary as the government moves to reform the constitution.

Earlier this week, Moise had appointed his seventh prime minister since coming to office in 2017.

“I have appointed citizen Ariel Henry to the post of Prime Minister. He will have to form a government of openness including the vital forces of the nation, solve the glaring problem of insecurity and support the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) for the realization of the general elections and the referendum,” President Moïse said.