

Haiti's President Appoints New Electoral Council



Port au Prince, May 8 (RHC) – Haitian President Michel Martelly has appointed a nine-member council tasked with organizing municipal and legislative elections this year, that were supposed to be held more than two years ago.

In a speech broadcast on Haitian TV, Martelly named the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), which is made up of three members each chosen by the judiciary, parliament and the presidency.

As one of his choices Martelly appointed attorney Fritz Canton, currently defending former dictator Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier against charges of public corruption and crimes against humanity.

Martelly blamed the delay in forming the council on the Senate, which strongly opposes his policies, and listed a number of concessions he had made after lengthy discussions with political parties and members of parliament.

The Senate, however, must still approve an electoral law before the CEP starts its work.

The vote would be the first since Martelly was elected in 2011.

In related news, clashes have erupted in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, between police and students protesting in support of striking teachers involved in a wage dispute with the government.

Haitian teachers have been on a strike over the past three days, weeks ahead of national exams at schools. They are protesting the government's failure to give them a promised wage raise of up to 50 percent.

The Haitian Education Ministry says the wage increases demanded by the teachers will not come into effect until a new budget is approved by the Senate of the Caribbean country.

Hundreds of high school students, many of them in their school uniforms, marched near the capital's National Palace on Wednesday to vent their frustration over canceled classes.

The students blocked traffic in Port-au-Prince and threw stones at the police, who responded by firing tear gas. There were no reports of arrests or injuries.

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