

1. January 6, 2017

Dear Friends and Supporters of Haitian Connection,

Please keep Jeremie and the Grand'Anse region in your prayers. Guy Philippe, a senator-elect was "kidnapped" and taken to the US on drug charges Thursday night. He is from Pestel, which isn't far from Jérémie, and is a very popular politician in the area, having won election to the Haitian Senate in a landslide during the recent elections. He is beloved by most of the people in the Grand'Anse. Since his arrest there has been widespread violence along the road from PAP to Jérémie and in Jérémie itself. His followers are very angry--demonstrating, burning tires and setting fire to police departments. Roads are closed, people are fearful of going out. Stores and schools are closed. Pro-Philippe demonstrators are threatening Americans in Jeremie. The U.S. Embassy issued a statement recommending that American citizens in the southern peninsula shelter in place and consider leaving the area when the protests have died down. In all my years in Haiti, this is the first time that the unrest has been so specifically anti-American, so we need to be very cautious,

I finished packing my suitcase in order to fly to Port au Prince on Sunday. But Haitian friends called me Friday morning to advise me not to come right now. I will keep updating you as things develop. I cancelled my flight and will wait out the situation. It will not be resolved quickly unless the US is releasing Guy Philippe. The question is why wait until now to arrest him, why was he not arrested earlier even before the election. Haitians view this not so much as an affront of Guy Philippe but rather as an affront to Haiti's sovereignty. Guy Philippe will have a hearing this Friday. We will see what the response of the population will be. The elections promised political stability which is now in question.

So do keep us all in prayer,

Best

Renate