

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 37/06 (AMR 36/007/2006, 14 February 2006) Fear for safety/Possible excessive use of force

HAITI Demonstrators in Port-au-Prince

On Thursday 16 February, the *Conseil Électoral Provisoire* (CEP), Haitian Provisional Electoral Council, declared René Garcia Préval the winner of the presidential elections. Most demonstrations appear to have ceased in Port-au-Prince.

After the first round of presidential elections on 7 February, Préval, who is supported by many of the poorer people in Haiti, appeared to have won. However, with 90% of the votes counted it appeared that he had failed to secure the 50% of votes he needed to be declared the outright winner.

The CEP decided to change the way ballots were being counted and to ignore the large number of blank votes that were affecting the results. The Associated Press reported the discovery of "hundreds of empty ballot boxes, at least one vote tally sheet and several empty bags - numbered and signed by the heads of polling stations - strewn across the fly-infested dump eight kilometres north of Port-au-Prince." The adverse effect of the blank ballot papers seemed to add to what many saw as a flawed election process that was purposely unfavourable to the most popular candidate.

Préval's rivals have expressed their dissatisfaction with the election results, but human rights groups seem to be expressing cautious approval.

On 14 February, the UN Security Council approved an extension to the United Nations Stabilisation Force in Haiti (MINUSTAH) mandate, which was due to expire on the 15 February, until 15 August 2006.

No further action is required from the UA network at present. Amnesty International will continue to call for investigations into any deaths of civilians which appear to result from the excessive use of force by security forces and will take further campaigning action as necessary. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.