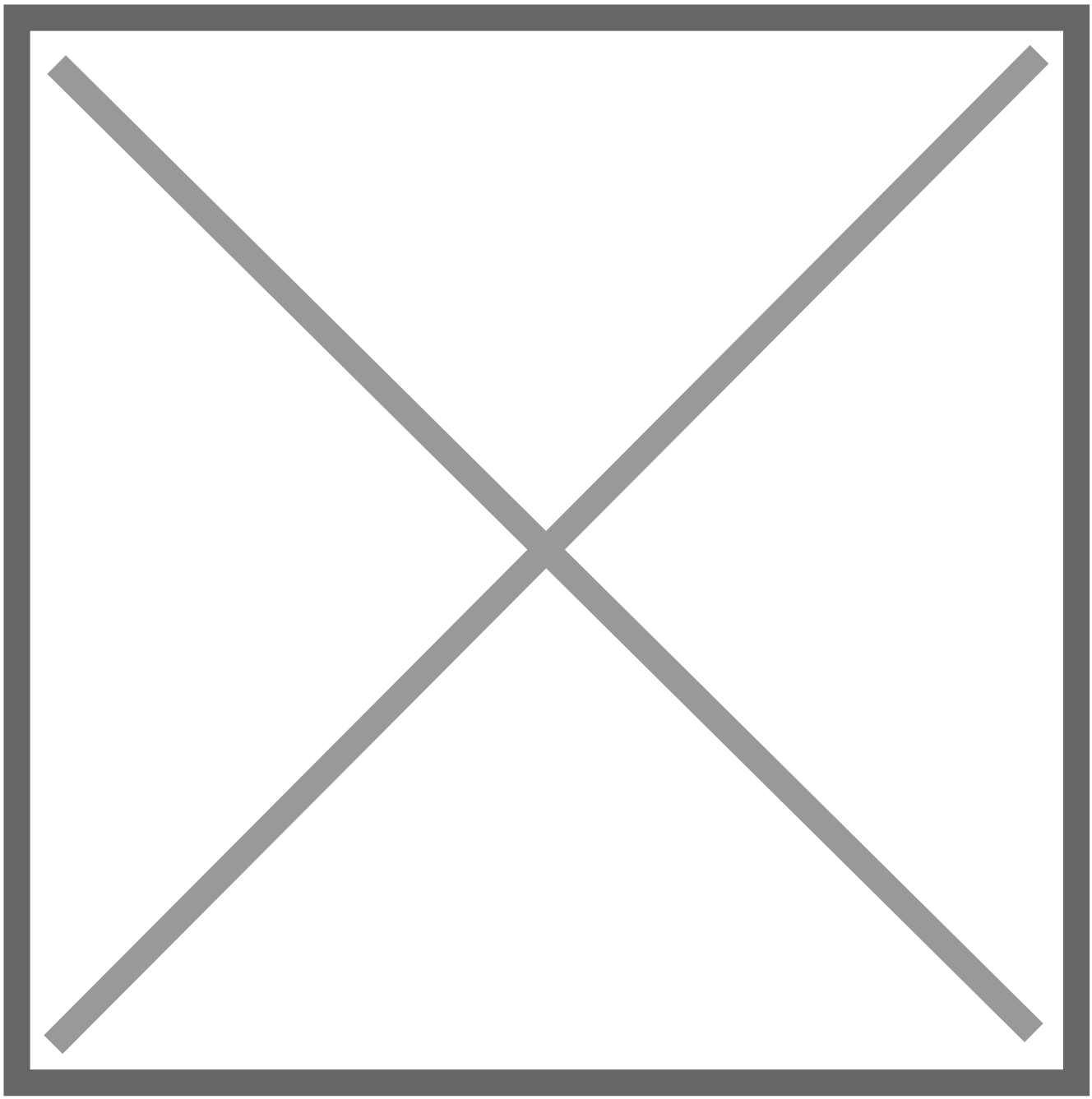
News



Bishop Pierre Andre Dumas of Nippes, Haiti, vice president of the Haitian bishops' conference, is pictured in a file photo. (CNS/Paul Haring)



by Catholic News Service

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Port-au-Prince, Haiti — September 4, 2020
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A Catholic bishop criticized a government official's offer that the church could name the Haitian ambassador to the Holy See if church officials promptly nominated a Catholic representative to the Provisional Electoral Council.

Bishop Pierre Andre Dumas of Nippes, Haiti, vice president of the Haitian bishops' conference, told the congregation at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Petite Riviere de Nippes Aug. 30 that a government minister had telephoned him the previous week with the plan, reported Haitian media.

All nine electoral council members resigned in July to protest incompetence and corruption in the government of President Jovenal Moise.

In his homily, Dumas called the request a bribe.

"When a minister asks you to do such a thing, it shows that he has no understanding of the meaning of honesty and transparency," Dumas said.

"We are in an extremely difficult and painful situation in which people don't understand the role of the church in society," the bishop added.

However, Claude Joseph, Haiti's minister of foreign affairs and religious affairs, denied Sept. 2 that such a proposal was made to Dumas, saying it would be inappropriate to do so, Haiti Gazette reported.

"In the event, it may be a misinterpretation of a conversation between the bishop and a government minister," Joseph said.

The Moise government has been under siege since 2018 as protests grew in opposition to the government's mismanagement of loans from Venezuela. For

months, protesters blocked streets and roads and forced schools to close across the country.

Since then, gangs have proliferated and human rights organizations have charged that some members of the government have been using the gangs to eliminate dissidents.

In January, the mandate of the Haitian congress expired, and Moise since has ruled by decree, with widespread support from the international community, including the United States and the Organization of American States.

Haitians opposed to Moise believe it is impossible to organize legitimate elections under the current setting and that a political agreement must be brokered for a transitional government that would put in place conditions for credible elections in 2021.

The Haitian Constitution requires that the Provisional Electoral Council consist of nine members representing different sectors of society, including labor unions, Catholic and Protestant churches, human rights organizations, women, the private sector, peasants and the media.

Luis Almagro, secretary general of the Organization of American States, has urged Moise to form a new electoral council rapidly. However, many potential members are reluctant to participate in a new council established by a government that has lost credibility and faces widespread doubts that it can carry out untainted elections.

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