

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Addressing Political Instability and Collapse in Haiti

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, Haiti has suffered from political instability, natural disasters and economic failures. In July 2018, mass protests broke out against increases in fuel price, and people were frustrated over the president Jovenel Moïse. Spreading corruption across the country, Moïse's widely criticized term cancellations increased tensions between government and citizens. The power vacuum resulting from President Moïse's assassination on 7 July 2021 resulted in Prime Minister Ariel Henry assuming power but with a weak and disputed government that was less effective in providing security or basic goods.

In the vacuum of authority, gangs have established control over Haiti's capital city of Port-au-Prince and its neighborhoods and have performed massive crimes and violence. By 2023–2024, gangs had control over nearly 80 percent of the capital city, forcing tens of thousands out of their neighborhoods and refusing entry for humanitarian groups, resulting in dire humanitarian crises coupled with political breakdown and gang violence. The resignation of Ariel Henry (former Haiti prime minister) in 2024 and the formation of a Transitional Presidential Council were moves toward political transition, yet the path to stability remains uncertain and distant. It is paramount to deal with the problem in Haiti while catering to both Haitian sovereignty and dire humanitarian and security imperatives.

Definition of Key Terms

Transitional Presidential Council (CPT)

The Transitional Presidential Council (CPT) is a temporary body responsible to exercise the duties and power of the President of Haiti until a new president is elected or until 7 February 2026, whichever comes first.

Petrocaribe Corruption Scandal

A major scandal involving billions of dollars in Venezuelan oil loans intended for development projects, which were instead embezzled by political elites between 2008–2016. The scandal became a rallying cry in protests beginning in 2018.

Coup d'état

A coup d'état or simply a coup, is typically an illegal and overt attempt by a military organization or other government elites to unseat a current leadership.

Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS)

In October 2023, the UN Security Council authorized the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti, led by Kenya, to address escalating gang violence and reestablish security. The mission aims to stabilize the country amid a deteriorating humanitarian crisis. However, funding and resource shortages have delayed progress, reflecting broader challenges in supporting non-UN-led missions.

Illicit Economies

The illegal production, movement, and sale of goods and services across country borders without permission. Illicit economies are always considered as extreme violations of laws, but usually states are unable to enforce prohibition or punish the people involved.

Revolutionary Forces of the G9 Family and Allies

A powerful coalition of armed gangs in Port-au-Prince led by former police officer Jimmy “Barbecue” Chérizier. The G9 controls over 80% of the capital Port-au-Prince.

Background

Haiti became the world's first black-led republic and the first independent Caribbean state when it overthrew French colonial control and slavery in the early 19th Century. However, chronic instability, dictatorships and natural disasters in recent decades have left it as the poorest nation in the Americas.

Post-Coup Instability and International Intervention (2004-2007)

In February 2004, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country to go into exile in the face of massive street demonstrations and an armed rebellion. After the brief appearance of the U.S.-led multinational interim force, in June 2004 the United Nations established the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH for short in its French-language acronym. MINUSTAH worked closely with the interim government from 2004 to 2006, when, after many postponements, elections were conducted. Although the mission stabilized the Haitian politics and assisted in conducting elections, it was criticized by the population due to accusations of involvement in bringing cholera to Haiti and sexual abuse by certain troops.

Governance Challenges and Corruption (2008-2017)

Under Petrocaribe, a strategic petroleum accord with bordering Venezuela in 2006, Haiti—the poorest country in the Americas—socked hard cash by buying fuel on credit from petroleum-rich neighbors and paying back in 25 years. Governments were to invest the spare cash into developing the economy and funding social programs. Instead, at least \$2 billion (equivalent to almost a quarter of Haiti’s total economy for 2017) went missing and Haitians saw few of the promised benefits whilst still owing Venezuela billions of dollars for the borrowed oil.



Figure 1: A man carries his son as they look for cover during fighting in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Protests and Political Crisis (2018–2020)

When Venezuela cut back the exportation of oil to Haiti in March of 2018, fuel shortages followed. With the abolition of government subsidies in July, the cost of kerosene rose over 50 percent, with attendant sharp rises in the prices of other fossil fuels. The resultant spikes in the taxation of gasoline, diesel, and kerosene that occurred on 7 July 2018 set Haitians into the streets. Flights in and out of Haiti were suspended by American carriers. The government rolled back the tax increases, and President Moïse accepted the resignation of inexperienced prime minister Jack Guy Lafontant on 14 July 2018, and then Jean-Henry Céant a month later. Jovenel Moïse was held responsible. In Port-au-Prince and urban centers, mass protests began in the form of economic protests that later escalated to calling for the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse. Protesters are demanding a more in-depth investigation into allegations that top officials in the previous government misused billions of dollars in proceeds from a Venezuela-subsidized oil plan meant to fund urgent social programs. Critics accuse Moïse of trying to protect his ally, former President Michel Martelly, and of participating in the corruption himself before becoming president. As declining employment, inflation, and standard of living further energized more protests, the demonstrations continued throughout 2019. Dozens died in bloody confrontations between security forces and protesters, as well as government, business, and school shutdowns. With delayed parliamentary elections and a still-decision-making president by decree, the government had essentially disappeared by 2020.



Figure 2: Demonstrators march through the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The Assassination of Jovenel Moïse (2021)

On 7 July 2021, Moïse was assassinated, allegedly by a group of 28 foreign mercenaries. Later that day, USGPN (L'Unité de Sécurité Générale du Palais National, or The General Security Unit of the National Palace) killed three of the suspected assassins and arrested 20 others. Ariel Henry took over the role of prime minister on 20 July. In September 2021, Henry dismissed a prosecutor who was going to interrogate him regarding the account of phone calls, which he asserted he never received, in the hours following the assassination by Joseph Felix Badio, whose participation in the assassination was suspected. Badio was apprehended by Haitian authorities in relation to the killing on 19 October 2023. A former Haitian senator, Joseph Joël John, who hoped to be president; a retired Colombian army officer, Germán Alejandro Rivera Garcia; a Haitian businessman, Rodolphe Jaar and—in 2024—a former DEA informant, Joseph Vincent, were each sentenced in a Miami court to life imprisonment for participating in the assassination. In February 2024, the fifth Haitian judge to preside over the murder probe indicted Moïse's wife Martine and his prime minister Claude Joseph as co-conspirators in the killing partly on testimony from Badio. Joseph stated that Ariel Henry was "weaponizing the Haitian justice system" and that the charges against him and against Moïse's widow were politically motivated. Concurrently, former police chief Léon Charles was indicted for murder and attempted murder.



Figure 3: Mourners gathered outside the Presidential palace in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Wednesday to pay their respects to President Jovenel Moïse.

Escalation of Violence and Humanitarian Collapse (2022-2023)

In September 2022, new rounds of protests occurred in Haiti after the government removed fuel subsidies, suddenly doubling prices. Gangs seized upon the chaos, with the G9 Family and Allies gang alliance — led by a former police officer named Jimmy “Barbecue” Chérizier — blocking access to the Varreux fuel terminal. The blockade has devastated the economy, broke electricity, and ruined chances for humanitarian aid to be delivered. The crisis came amid a cholera epidemic, deepening hunger and mass displacement. The United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on Chérizier and other gang leaders, while Canada placed sanctions against a number of Haitian businessmen who have allegedly financed gangs. Gangs tightened their grip, in spite of international condemnation. By late 2023, it was reported that gangs controlled up to 60-80% of Port-au-Prince.



Figure 4: Jimmy ‘Barbecue’ Chérizier leads a march against Haiti’s prime minister, Ariel Henry, in Port-au-Prince on 19 September 2023.

The Power Vacuum and Transitional Council (2024–Present)

Early in 2024, Prime Minister Ariel Henry went overseas to garner support for a Kenyan-led peace enforcement mission. The armed clashes involving gangs, police and vigilantes took place on the same day Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry arrived in Kenya for talks on the deployment of a multinational security mission in the country backed by the United Nations. Henry was blocked from returning to the country and eventually resigned in March 2024 due to pressure from domestic and international forces. A Transitional Presidential Council was then established to ensure stability within Haiti. The council, which included political group representatives, has the power to choose a new prime minister and organize elections by 2026. Former UN representative Garry Conille was chosen as prime minister in May 2024.

Major Parties Involved

Transitional Presidential Council (CPT)

Set up in April 2024 upon the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, the Transitional Presidential Council can name a new prime minister, schedule elections by 2026, and direct the political transition. The Transitional Presidential Council is made up of representatives from political parties, private sector leaders, and civil society representatives. Although internationally acknowledged, the legitimacy of the CPT in Haiti is open to question as a result of deep-seated distrust in the political elites and the outright gang domination.

Gang Coalitions (G9 and Viv Ansanm)

Armed gangs that control large sections of the capital and are bosses in several sectors. The most powerful alliance, G9 Family and Allies, is led by retired policeman Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier. In 2024, gangs associated with the "Viv Ansanm" umbrella allied to loot police stations, prisons, and government buildings. Gangs fund activities through kidnappings-for-ransom, drug trafficking, and extortions, and are among the most destabilizing factor in the crisis.

Kenya

Kenya sent the first ever Commander in support of the UN stabilization mission in Haiti. Deployment, authorized by the Kenyan parliament in early 2024, seeks to send 1,000 police personnel to assist Haitian security forces. The initial batch arrived late in mid-2024 because of challenges in terms of funding, logistics and scale of violence.

United Nations (UN)

The UN has involved itself with Haiti through peacekeeping missions, sanctions and humanitarian assistance over the years. In October 2023, the Security Council approved a Multinational Security Support Force (MSS) to assist the Haitian National Police. The UN also directs food distribution, medical services, and assistance to refugees; however, its presence is widely resented because of past controversies, including the introduction of cholera during MINUSTAH).

United States

Since 2021, the U.S. has provided nearly \$813 million in economic, development, health, and security assistance to Haiti and more than \$430 million in humanitarian assistance. Development assistance from the United States supports Haiti's economic growth, provides essential health care and education services, and strengthens citizen security. The United States provides security assistance through support for the MSS mission, as well as through direct bilateral assistance to the HNP.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
February 2004	President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown.
June 1, 2004	The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established on 1 June 2004 through Security Council resolution 1542.
February 7, 2006	President Rene Preval was elected as President of the Republic of Haiti.
January 12, 2010	A 7.0 magnitude earthquake strikes near Port-au-Prince, killing approximately 230,000 and leaving over 1.5 million homeless.

July 2018	The government announces fuel subsidy cuts, which trigger widespread protests over economic conditions.
July 7, 2021	President Moïse is killed at his residence in Port-au-Prince by a group of foreign mercenaries.
September 14, 2022	The government of Haiti says it will lift fuel subsidies, which causes a massive increase in fuel prices. Nationwide protests took place.
January 2024	After the failure to hold elections as gang violence intensifies, Haiti has few democratically elected officials; democratic institutions further undermined.
February 29, 2024	Coordinated gang attacks across Port-au-Prince that murdered police officers; Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier takes credit; among goals is to keep PM Ariel Henry out.
March 2024	Agreement with Kenya to deploy 1,000 police officers to bolster Haitian National Police. Historic prison break: gangs attack two large prisons, freeing more than 4,000 inmates. State of emergency; night-time curfews imposed.
June 2024	New government to replace Ariel Henry's government. Transitional government institutions to be merged.
October 2024	Gran Grif gang "Pont-Sondé attack": massacre with more than 100 deaths, displacement.
December 6-7, 2024	Wharf Jérémie gang massacre in Cité Soleil; hundreds dead, numerous victims elderly Vodou practitioners.
April 2025	UN Security Council noted gangs are taking more control; concern that state control is receding.
March 7, 2025	New Transitional Presidential Council head (Fritz Alphonse Jean) sworn in, as violence continues; government reiterates that it will hold elections in Feb. 2026.
August 2025	Haiti declares 3-month state of emergency in West, Artibonite, Center departments due to escalating gang violence and its humanitarian/agricultural consequences; police chief dismissed.

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The situation in Haiti has been recognized by the UN multiple times through resolutions such as:

- In the aim to stabilize the situation after the 2004 coup, a multinational force was mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1529 February 29, 2004.
- MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) was established by UNSC Resolution 1542 on 30 April 2004, its objectives were the promotion of security, upholding the rule of law, and assistance to the political process.
- MINUSTAH's mandate was extended by UNSC Resolution 1576, 29 November 2004, with particular attention to disarmament of armed groups and reconciliation process.
- Resolution 1780 (2007), 15 Oct. 2007 — MINUSTAH renewed for one year; it extended the Mission's deployment, increasing the police component and decreasing the military, and called for strengthening institutions outside of Port-au-Prince.
- Resolution 1780 (2007), 15 Oct. 2007 — Extended MINUSTAH for a further year; it reinstated the Mission's deployment, increasing the police component and decreasing the military, and called for strengthening institutions outside of Port-au-Prince.

- Resolution 2243 (2015), 14 October 2015 — Extended MINUSTAH's mandate to the then-current levels of forces; anticipated a possible withdrawal of the mission or transition on conditions.
- Resolution 2645 (2022), 15 July 2022 — Renewed the mandate of BINUH (UN Integrated Office in Haiti) for a further year; prioritized human rights, gender-based violence, State Security, and illicit arms trade to the gangs, and urged the gangs to end their activities.

Possible Solutions

One possible area for delegates to consider is security. Haiti continues to face widespread violence that undermines stability and daily life. Solutions could aim at creating safer conditions, though the exact form of support is left open to discussion. The focus should be on how to reduce violence while respecting Haiti's sovereignty.

Political stability is a key dimension as well. Representatives may wish to negotiate mechanisms for encouraging Haitian stakeholders to talk and to find a way towards improved governance. Broadly, the objective would be institutional building and setting the stage for ultimate elections, but the precise process must remain fluid for the sake of bargaining.

Humanitarian concerns must also be considered. Food, health care, and shelter shortages are now faced by many Haitians. Delegates may consider how the international community may provide assistance to those who are most vulnerable. Longer-term development interventions may also be considered as one way of reducing vulnerability and building resilience at the same time.

Justice and accountability are another of the concern areas. Representatives can consider how to further the rule of law in Haiti, including respect for human rights. Efforts in that sense would help restore confidence on the part of the populace and limit impunity, but mechanisms should be left to negotiation.

Finally, regional and international cooperation needs to be considered. The Haitian crisis has international and regional implications, and cooperation could be necessary in order to find long-term solutions. Delegates can consider how different international allies can cooperate in assisting Haiti without suggesting foreign solutions.

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