

Haiti in a spiral of violence

The multidimensional crisis and spiralling violence in Haiti has reached its peak, with criminal gangs in control of 80 % of the capital Port-au-Prince. On 11 March 2024, Prime Minister Ariel Henry announced his resignation. Hopes lie with a transitional governance arrangement that was agreed at a meeting in Jamaica between Haitian stakeholders, CARICOM and representatives from the international community. The installation of the Transitional Presidential Council is a precondition set by Kenya to lead the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti authorised by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in October 2023.

Haiti's multidimensional crisis

Since the 7 July 2021 assassination of [President Jovenel Moïse](#), insecurity has spiked and [gang](#) control of the country has expanded continuously. According to the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Volker Türk](#), in January and February 2023, 1 193 people have been killed by gang violence. [Homicides](#) rose from 1 141 in 2019 to 2 183 in 2022 and more than 4 700 in 2023, representing an increase of 400 % within five years. Currently, 80% of the capital Port-au-Prince is under the control of criminal gangs. On 3 March 2024, the government declared a three-day [state of emergency](#) and a night-time curfew after armed gangs stormed the country's two biggest jails, allowing more than 4 000 criminals to escape back onto the streets.

The explosion of violence in Haiti does not come as a surprise. In fact, the multidimensional [crises](#) have been looming for years and are characterised by the intertwining of politics and criminal business, political deadlock, extreme violence, and dire humanitarian conditions. Some [experts](#) also blame the international community for their failure to contribute to a long-term solution. Since the assassination of President Moïse, the country has lacked an elected president, legislature, and mayors. Backed by the international community, [Ariel Henry](#) has acted as Haiti's prime minister since 20 July 2021, following the resignation of Claude Joseph as interim Prime Minister. However, a [political stalemate](#) has persisted over whether Henry or a transitional government should govern until elections can be convened and an elected government is in place. According to [observers](#), the vacuum of democratically accountable political authority has created space for the gangs to expand their influence. The dramatic escalation in violence and protests, including roadblocks, has led to food and fuel shortages and thousands fleeing their homes. The [World Food Programme](#) estimates that 4.4 million people, representing 44 % of Haiti's population, are facing acute food insecurity. This includes 1.4 million living in an emergency situation and about 276 000 children aged between six months and six years. Currently, more than 360 000 people have been [internally displaced](#). In addition, the health system is on the brink of collapse, with many health facilities having been forced to shut down.

International community response

In October 2023, the UNSC (in response to the 2022 [request](#) by the Haitian authorities for an international specialised armed police force to address the insecurity resulting from criminal action by armed gangs) [authorised](#) the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti; it will be headed by Kenya, which agreed to deploy 1 000 police officers. Other [countries](#) such as Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, and Jamaica have also pledged to contribute. Despite its authorisation by the UNSC, the mission is not a UN peacekeeping operation but a multinational operation conducted by an ad hoc coalition tasked with supporting the Haitian National Police in re-establishing security and building security conditions conducive to holding free and fair elections.

Given the recent dramatic security deterioration, on 11 March 2024 the [Caribbean Community](#) (CARICOM) convened Haitian stakeholders and representatives from Brazil, Canada, France, Mexico, UN and the United States to discuss the multidimensional crisis in Haiti. Following the meeting in Jamaica, CARICOM issued an [outcome declaration](#) on a transitional governance arrangement. Participants agreed on the establishment



of a Transitional Presidential Council comprised of seven voting and two observer members that should swiftly select and appoint an interim Prime Minister. The Transitional Presidential Council will, together with the Interim Prime Minister, appoint an inclusive Council of Ministers. Individuals who have been sanctioned by the UN, individuals intending to compete in the next election, and individuals who oppose [UNSC Resolution 2699](#) authorising the Multinational Security Support Mission are excluded from the council. Ariel Henry has committed to resigning immediately upon the installation of the council. The installation of the Transitional Presidential Council (which at the time of writing is still in the making) is a [precondition](#) set by Kenya to lead the security mission.

United States (US) Secretary of State Antony Blinken [announced](#) on 11 March 2024 an additional US\$100 million to fund the deployment of the security support mission, bringing total US support for this effort to US\$300 million. He also announced an additional US\$33 million in humanitarian aid.

However, [Jimmy Cherizier](#) – one of Haiti's most powerful gang leaders, known as 'Barbecue', who is under UN and European Union (EU) sanctions – has said that his coalition of armed groups, known as the '[G9 Family and Allies](#)', will continue the fight for Haiti's liberation, painting himself as a revolutionary and [threatening political leaders](#) who are set to take part in the Transitional Presidential Council.

European Union support for Haiti

The EU has [allocated](#) more than €200 million in bilateral assistance to the country since 2021, with the focus on enabling the continuity of basic public services for the Haitian population. Overall, since 1994, the EU has supported Haiti with €500 million, which makes Haiti the largest recipient of EU humanitarian aid in Latin America and the Caribbean. The EU's support for Haiti is twofold: on the one hand, to strengthen institutional capacity, and on the other to facilitate the population's access to basic public services in the very insecure and volatile context. Given the recent developments, the European Commission allocated an additional [€20 million](#) in emergency humanitarian aid to Haiti on 13 March 2024 to help humanitarian partners address the most urgent needs of the population, in terms of protection, food assistance, nutrition, water and sanitation, and healthcare.

On 21 October 2022, the UN Security Council adopted a sanctions regime against members of the Haitian political and economic elite who support armed gangs. On 28 July 2023, the EU set up an [autonomous framework](#) allowing the EU to impose sanctions on individuals (such as the above-mentioned Jimmy Cherizier) and entities responsible for threatening the peace, security or stability of Haiti, or for undermining democracy or the rule of law in Haiti. On 15 January, the EU added four more people to the list of those sanctioned in connection with the situation in Haiti. HR/VP Borrell [said](#) that the EU would support the broader objectives of the Multinational Security Support Mission, once it is deployed, through the EU's cooperation instruments.

Views

While international actors including the US and the [EU welcomed](#) the outcome of the Jamaica meeting, an [expert](#) from Medico International criticised the agreement as another short-term technocratic solution from the outside with the principal objective of avoiding a refugee and migration wave that would affect the region. It would not provide for a sustainable solution to build a democratic state in Haiti. [Jake Johnston](#), Haiti expert at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, criticises the fact that the US and other foreign powers have pushed Haiti into a pact that will face legitimacy concerns and is unlikely to lead to a solution to the current crisis by itself.

European Parliament position

In October 2022, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on human rights breaches in Haiti and called for a durable, time-bound and commonly accepted solution to allow for fair legislative and presidential elections. Moreover, Parliament encouraged the EU and international financial institutions to increase their financial support for Haiti. On 5 February 2024, during their plenary session, MEPs exchanged views with the European Commission on the situation in Haiti on the eve of the deployment of the United Nations Multinational Security Support Mission.