



SC: Security Council

Student Officer: Kerem Demir Karahan

Issue: The situation in Haiti

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## I. Introduction

Haiti, when it declared independence in 1804, was the first and still the only colony in the world in which slaves led a revolution leading to the colony's freedom. Their autonomy, however, came with a daunting cost: 150 million francs to be paid to France. Since then, Haiti has been unable to unshackle itself from its economic burdens, cultivating in the US occupation of the country from 1915 until 1934. This was followed by the establishment of a hereditary dictatorship, which fell only in 1954. That was followed by what best can be described as a failed experiment in democracy: elections with low turnouts followed by military coups. The United Nations intervened in 2004, followed by not only a cholera outbreak but also a devastating earthquake that left much of the impoverished country in ruins.

Since President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in July 2021, establishing efficient governance has been a challenge. Hence, a void of authority has been created that armed groups have taken advantage of. More than 80% of Haiti's capital is under gang control. As of 2024, no single elected official remains in Haiti, as they are all in exile following the culmination of the Gang Wars in Port-au-Prince to necessitate international intervention, which first arrived on the island on June 25th, 2024.

Haiti's current unstable status results from widespread gang violence, unstable governance, and severe humanitarian problems. In addition to weakening governmental institutions and public safety, the ongoing turmoil has led to increasing distress among displaced civilians. The situation in Haiti has been a significant agenda item for the United Nations, particularly concerning human rights, security, and humanitarian assistance.

International efforts to improve the situation have included proposals for a transitional government and the deployment of foreign security troops. Yet, the local populations have often viewed these interventions with suspicion and have called for Haitian-led solutions. As the country grapples with these intricate problems, an extensive strategy that addresses both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term political stability is more crucial than ever.



## II. Involved Countries and Organizations

### Haiti

The first independent country in the Caribbean, only the second republic to have been established in the Americas, the first country in the Americas to abolish slavery, and the first colony to defeat a European power, Haiti is the heir of a proud history. However, today, by all metrics, Haiti is seen as a failed state, one that is failing to establish its authority over its own land. The problems of Haiti are multifaceted, and some can indeed be classified as acts of God, such as the earthquake in 2010.

Although, on paper, democracy is present in Haiti, it has frequently been challenged by the military, and military coups mark the country's recent history.

The country's social, political, and economic problems led to the formation of many gangs, which have galvanized into a gang war starting in 2020 and are still ongoing.

### France

France plays a multifaceted role in the ongoing situation in Haiti, which is shaped by historical ties, humanitarian aid, and political engagement. The colonizer of Haiti, France, has kept some degree of influence over the tiny Caribbean nation, especially its early history. The indemnity that France received from Haiti is seen by many as the main reason for Haiti's economic woes. The indemnity and subsequent loans from French banks imposed a long-term economic burden on Haiti, projected to cost the country over \$21 billion in today's currencies owing to missed chances for investment and growth.

### United Nations (UN)

Especially after the end of the Second World War, the United Nations has been increasingly present in Haiti. Following the 2004 coup d'état, the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti, more commonly referred to as MINUSTAH, its French acronym, was stationed in Haiti as a peacekeeping mission. The mission was rather successful in bringing stability and halting violence. Still, it was involved in many controversies as well, including causing a cholera outbreak and being complicated in sexual abuse cases. Still, its mandate was renewed until 2017, when it was replaced by the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). Unlike MINUSTAH, MINUJUSTH had no military personnel and was composed entirely of civilian personnel. In 2019, UN Peacekeeping operations on the island were concluded. They were replaced by the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), which reported on the political and humanitarian situation in the country.





On 2 October 2023, the United Nations Security Council approved the formation of an international police and military force to restore law and order amid the worsening gang wars. Despite being sanctioned by the Security Council, this mission is not classified as a peacekeeping operation.

## United States of America (USA)

The proximity of Haiti to US shores led to the United States exercising significant influence in both the international relations and internal affairs of Haiti throughout Haiti's history. The invasion in 1915 and the treaty that followed resulted in complete American power over the governance of Haiti. Even after the American withdrawal, they remained in control of Haiti's finances and continued to exploit the investments that they had implemented during the occupation to exert soft power. During the Cold War, the United States provided aid to François Duvalier, intending to prevent Soviet dominance in the region and to counter the Communists in Cuba. Later, it led to military interventions in Haiti in response to coups, one in 1994 and the other in 2004. It has also been a part of multinational task forces aimed to bring relief to Haiti and remains wielding considerable influence over the island country's policies.

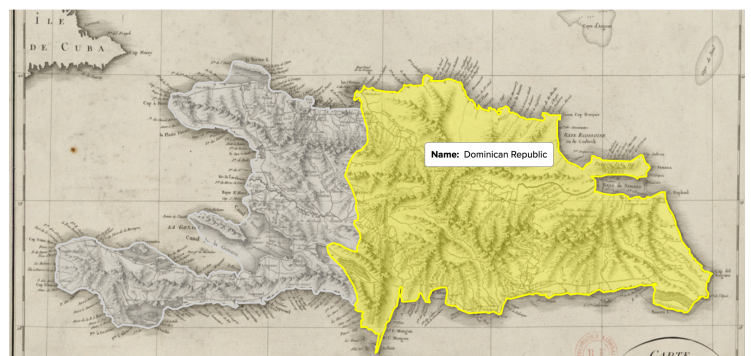
## III. Focused Overview of the Issue

### 1. History of Haiti

As discussed previously, Haiti's history has been marked by its bloody war of independence, which resulted in the world's first and only successful slave revolution. The cost of their independence, however, was unprecedented: 150 million francs in 1825, creating a debt that would take Haiti until 1947 to pay.

The country experienced its first coup d'état just two years after its independence, in 1806, leading to its division into two separate states. It wouldn't be until 1820 that Haiti would be one again. This was also when the French demanded their debt payments and the start of Haiti's economic problems. In 1842, as the island's economy was finally starting to recover from the thirty years of continuous war, an earthquake struck Haiti. It destroyed most of the only cities in the country, killing 10,000 people.

Between 1842 and 1911, Haiti lost the eastern half of Hispaniola as the Dominican Republic declared independence. A brief period of parliamentary rule was stopped by the president claiming the title of emperor, just for another coup d'état to be done by one of the generals in the army. Following the general's rule, two consecutive coup d'états took place; however, in 1874, Haiti finally



"Picture 1: Map of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1844 - 2019 "





entered a period of relative prosperity. The main payment of the debt to France was completed, and power was finally transferred peacefully in a democratic system of governance. A national bank was created, and industrial developments reached the island, encouraging economic growth and trade.

In 1911, a revolution broke out, followed by five presidents between 1911 and 1915, all five of whom were either exiled or killed. The German community in Haiti was becoming more and more influential in the country and started to control most of the country's commercial investments. The American government, hoping to limit German influence, encouraged American banks to invest in Haiti. When, in 1915, another revolt started, American investors pleaded to Woodrow Wilson, the then president of the United States, to invade Haiti to ensure their investments would be secure.

The American invasion was met with fierce opposition from the population; however, their invasion also meant the pouring in of new ideas and technology from the United States. Haiti continued to be exploited for its economic opportunities. Still, the United States also created the seeds for what would grow to be a competitive democracy with strong institutions when they left in 1934.

Unfortunately, that lasted only until after WW2, which led to the start of a 15-year period of consecutive revolutions and coup d'états that culminated in Duvalier's election in 1957.

Duvalier, followed by his son, ruled the country until 1986, decimating any democratic institutions. Despite being authoritarian, Duvaliers enjoyed the support of the United States because they were against communism. Duvalier's son's regime was ridden with corruption and famine, finally cultivated in a revolt after the Pope condemned his regime.

Since 1986, the Haitian experiment has continued without much success. 2004 saw another coup d'état take place, followed by international intervention in Haiti. Although the rule of law was restored, an earthquake in 2010 decimated the country's infrastructure and economy, reversing any progress made in those respects. Furthermore, after the earthquake, a cholera outbreak led to the overwhelming of the already strained health system of the country.

Starting in 2018 with the election of Moïse and until his assassination in 2021, protests became widespread, and as documents revealing corruption became known to the public, the trust in Haiti's institutions once again vaporised.

## 2. Current Political Situation

Following Moïse's election, Ariel Henry assumed the position of acting prime minister. Since Moïse was dead, Haiti didn't have a head of state (i.e., president) during this period, despite Henry's promises that an election would take place.



Henry was also allegedly involved in Moïse's assassination, increasing concerns about his legitimacy as the head of government. When an earthquake struck Haiti in August 2021, Henry declared a state of emergency and postponed the presidential elections yet again.

During the fallout of the global energy crisis caused by the Russo-Ukrainian War, Henry's government declared that they would be ending fuel subsidies, as Haiti lacked the funds to support the program. This was met by fierce opposition from the general public, and an alliance of gangs called "G9 Family and Allies", led by a former police officer, "Barbecue," started the blockade of the country's largest fuel depot in September 2022. To counter the gangs, Henry asked foreign governments to intervene in the crisis by sending boots on the island, a request that was answered by the United States and Mexico. However, despite the action not receiving outright opposition from the United Nations, most governments, including that of the United States, were hesitant about the idea of deploying foreign troops in Haiti.

In October 2022, the Security Council approved a comprehensive sanctions regime against Haiti to stop gangs from obtaining financial resources and arms. The stand-off between the gangs and the government ended on the 9th of November when the government backed down from removing fuel subsidies.

In February 2024, when Henry travelled overseas to sign agreements about the deployment of Kenyan policemen in Haiti, gangs occupied the only airport in the country and freed 4,000 prisoners. Henry could not come into the country and, in March, agreed to resign once a transitional presidential council (TPC) was formed.





Picture 2: Protesters demanding the resignation of Ariel Henry.

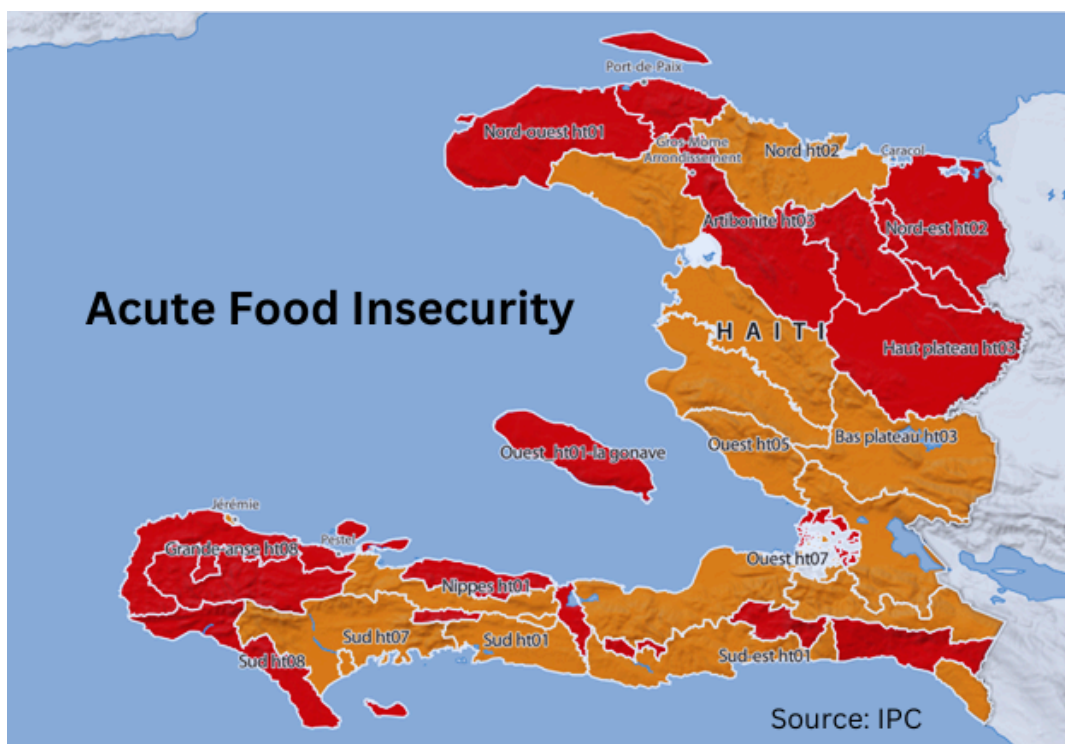
The transitional council was sworn in on April 12, 2024, and Henry resigned. The TPC functions as a collective executive led by its Chairman and has the powers of a president until another election is held.

Right now, gangs control around 80% of Port-au-Prince, and major breakouts take place in many prisons across the country.

### 3. Current Humanitarian Situation

The current humanitarian situation in the country is dire, with hunger, disease, and human rights violations rampant across Haiti.

As a result of the armed gang violence, Haiti is currently experiencing significant levels of food stress, with at least 5,000 citizens classified as experiencing starvation. According to Human Rights Watch, over half of Haitians suffer from chronic food insecurity, and about 22% of children are seriously underweight in Haiti. Additionally, water access has been limited. Over one-third of the population does not have access to clean water, and two-thirds have minimal to no sanitation service.



Picture 3: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

Furthermore, as a result of back-to-back hurricanes hitting the island country, housing is also stressed even more so, with many people living in tent homes provided by the United Nations. Likewise, the





2021 earthquake affected 800,000 people, and it increased the need for humanitarian aid, which includes access to housing, health, education, and other important services.

Nearly half of Haitians aged 15 and older lack literacy as a result of gang violence, the earthquake, the cholera outbreak, etc. In general, public education is of low quality. Since the majority of schools—roughly 85%—are private, students from low-income households are unable to receive an education. According to UNICEF, more than 250,000 children lacked access to suitable school structures as a result of the region's intense fighting and natural disasters.



Picture 4: Rebuilding Haiti: The post-earthquake path to recovery

Significant strains on the health system, combined with the unsanitary conditions created by the lack of a functioning government, led to the outbreak of many diseases, most significantly cholera. The first case of cholera was reported in early October, and the outbreak escalated quickly. As of November 27, 2023, more than 11,800 suspected cases and at least 223 deaths had been documented. The actual number of cases is expected to be much greater.

It is believed that 300,000 children are currently working as *restaveks*, a form of child trafficking and modern-day slavery, a practice that affects girls more than boys.

Problems disproportionately affecting women include lack of sanitation that increases the risks of complications in childbirth, and rape, which has increased in prevalence during the gang wars. The earthquake and rise in gang violence have made gender-based violence even more prevalent. It is also believed that prostitution of girls as young as 15 years old has become a common practice, usually in exchange for food.

Many journalists have been killed in the past years by both government forces and gang members for researching the corruption scandals of the country, especially the Petrocaribe scandal with Venezuela.

Kidnappings and torture are also considered to be commonplace in the Haitian legal system, highlighting the country's troubled institutions.



## IV. Key Vocabulary

**Corruption:** The Britannica defines corruption as “improper and usually unlawful conduct intended to secure a benefit for oneself or another. Its forms include bribery, extortion, and the misuse of inside information. It exists where there is community indifference or a lack of enforcement policies”. An important distinction to note is that although it is usually unlawful, there are many examples of lawful corruption.

**Coup d'état:** A Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations defines coup d'états as “the sudden, forcible, and illegal removal of a government, usually by the military or some part thereof, often precipitated by more immediate grievances bearing directly on the military.” It is important to note that these coups can often be a prelude to a military government, as was the case many times in Haiti.

**Indemnity:** Indemnity refers to the amount of money that must be repaid as part of a debt. As previously noted, Haiti's indemnity to France was 150 million Francs.

**Restavek:** A United Nations report on the issue notes that “The term restavèk comes from the French and Creole meaning ‘to stay with.’ Restavèk are generally children of poor rural families who are sent to stay with and work as unpaid domestic servants for less poor, urban families. Parents send a child away with the hope that in return for the child's labour, the host family will provide the child with food and shelter and send the child to school”. Despite the hope, the report also notes that this rarely is the case. Kids work without compensation and usually lose contact with their biological parents as the restavèk industry has become one based primarily on child trafficking.

**Gang:** Although not a definitive description, Britannica defines gangs as a group of people “who share a common identity and who generally engage in criminal behaviour. In contrast to the criminal behaviour of other youths, the activities of gangs are characterised by some level of organisation and continuity over time”.



## V. Important Events & Chronology

Only events from 2018 onwards are included in this chronology.

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
7 July 2018	Following the stop of fuel subsidies, Haitian people take to the streets to protest.
18 March 2019	A political deadlock resulting from the dismissal of the prime minister put foreign aid to Haiti on hold.
November 2019	<i>Peyi lok</i> (Country closed) period. Schools, courts, businesses, and public services were largely closed.
September - October 2020	Protests over government response to COVID-19.
14 January 2021	Large-scale protests against President Moïse.
7 July 2021	President Moïse is assassinated.
14 August 2021	Another earthquake strikes Haiti, leaving over 650,000 people in need of assistance.
24 April - 6 May 2022	Battle of Plaine du Cul-de-Sac, gangs fight turf wars near the capital.
8-9 July 2022	Gang violence spreads to the capital, leaving 89 dead.
September 2022	Fuel subsidies are challenged by the government again, leading to protests.
30 July 2023	Amidst worsening gang wars, the Kenyan government agrees to lead an international peace mission.
2 October 2023	The Security Council approves the international peace mission to Haiti.
2-3 March 2024	Jailbreaks in two of Haiti's biggest prisons resulted in more than 4,700 inmates escaping.
25 April 2024	The Transitional Presidential Council takes control.
30 September 2024	Famine is officially declared in Haiti by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.





## VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

United Nations Security Council Resolution [1529](#)

United Nations Security Council Resolution [1908](#)

United Nations Security Council Resolution [1927](#)

United Nations Security Council Resolution [2699](#)

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (General Assembly resolution [39/46](#))

## VII. Failed Solution Attempts

Beyond resolutions and promises of international intervention, not much has taken place to solve the current crisis in Haiti. The United Nations has taken a multifaceted approach to this matter to resolve humanitarian, political, and historical crises. The UN peacekeeping missions MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH were somewhat successful. Yet they fell short in several significant aspects, such as the failure to address sexual abuse and exploitation among peacekeepers. Aside from sexual assault, peacekeepers in Haiti were also physically threatening and harming citizens. Furthermore, the UN's handling of the 2010 cholera outbreak was especially problematic, as they first refused to investigate or accept responsibility, resulting in thousands of fatalities. Although different United Nations programs historically came to the island to provide humanitarian relief with some success, the current political situation necessitates an intervention that is yet to be seen in the island.

## VIII. Possible Solutions

Delegates may want to take a page out of the United Nations' administrative plans for Cambodia when the country was a United Nations Protectorate. Considering the lack of any legitimate government other than the newly formed TPC, the Security Council may move to take drastic measures, even creating a transitory government until elections may take place.

With regard to the humanitarian crisis, the delegates may wish to deploy the resources of the United Nations agencies under the protection of United Nations peacekeeping forces. The crumbling health system means that new health professionals must be brought into the country, and new health infrastructure must be built.



The justice system needs a complete revamp, and perhaps an international court like that for Yugoslavia and Rwanda is needed to try gang leaders who have engaged in human rights violations.

Economic restoration is necessary, and delegates may wish to seek the assistance of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund to encourage economic development on the island.

## IX. Useful Links

- <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/crisis-haiti> United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) website for Haiti
- <https://www.unocha.org/haiti> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) website for Haiti
- <https://binuh.unmissions.org/en> English website of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH)
- <https://haiti.un.org/en> Website for the United Nations mission in Haiti
- <https://haiti.iom.int/> International Organization for Migration's website for Haiti, which focuses on migration issues and humanitarian responses in Haiti
- <https://map.mappinghaitianrevolution.com/> Map Showing the Haitian Revolution from 1492 - 1950



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