

**Forum:** United Nations Security Council

**Issue:** The Situation in Haiti

**Student Officer:** Elif Eren

**Position:** President Chair

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## Introduction

Located on the island of Hispaniola located in the Caribbean Sea and bordering the Dominican Republic, Haiti has faced numerous dictatorships, coups, rebellions, foreign interventions, and natural disasters since its establishment in 1804. After facing a magnitude 7.0 earthquake in 2010, Haiti's capital city got destroyed, and around 200,000 were killed. 6 years later, Hurricane Matthew struck the country, damaging infrastructure, agriculture, and leading to displacement. Recently, another earthquake (7.2 magnitude) hit Haiti, leading to further despair. Moreover, following the assassination of the former President Jovenel Moïse, the Prime Minister Ariel Henry had been acting as both the Acting President and the Prime Minister of Haiti, which had exacerbated the political instability in the country and increased gang activity, leading to a revolt. Following the revolts, gang leader Jimmy Chérizier took control, and the PM resigned. As of now, Haiti is among the poorest countries in the world. Due to the combined effect of the long term effects of historical exploitation and on-going problems such as political instability, poverty and natural disasters; Haitian citizens have been devastated.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Coup d'Etat (Coup):** The sudden, violent and unlawful overthrow of an existing government. Coups are done by small groups for themselves, whereas revolutions are done by mass groups of people for the people.

**Political Instability:** The lack of continuity in governance due to frequent changes in leadership, weak institutions, lack of law enforcement, corruption, unfair elections, and socio-economic disparities. Natural disasters and ethnic or religious divisions can also play a role in political instabilities.

**United Nations Peacekeeping:** United Nations Peacekeeping forces aim to help countries in their path to navigating conflicts to peace. UN Peacekeeping operations have been taking place for more than 70 years, and there have been 71 operations in various regions of the world. Currently, the main gang leader in Haiti, Jimmy "Barbeque" Chérizier, is against the existence of peacekeeping forces in Haiti.

## General Overview

### Historical Background

The origins of Haiti's political instability can be traced to 1791 when the local Haitian population gained their freedom after defeating their colonialist French occupants after a swift takeover of the island. The victory, however, lasted short; the liberation of the island marked the end of an era of slavery yet started a new era of economic debt and underdevelopment. The French demanded the Haitians to pay "reparations" for the damage they had created on French assets, promising their independence if their wishes were fulfilled. The reparations, now believed to cost between 20 and 30 billion dollars, laid the foundation for a country that would be considered "the poorest of the Western Hemisphere". The reparations at the time of their establishment cost at least six times Haiti's GDP, so the country was encouraged to take loans from the French government, which later became Haiti's double debt. Over the following decades, the debts prevented Haiti from improving its nation, encouraging anarchy within the civil population to fulfill basic humanitarian needs. The governmental failure of Haiti could also be observed in the political spectrum, where seven presidents were assassinated in just four years.

This led to foreign intervention by the United States of America to re-democratize the country and to protect its own economic and political interests in 1915. That year, the US occupied Haiti with 330 U.S. Marines landing at the capital, Port-au-Prince. Despite its seemingly peaceful intentions, the United States of America ended up seizing many of Haiti's institution's efficiency. Haiti re-seized its independence back in 1934 but in a worse state than it was thirty years ago; the founding years of the country were marked with executions, kidnappings, and tortures of important political figures. The power vacuum that emerged through this landscape allowed François Duvalier to establish his dictatorial regime. Duvalier, fearing the fate of the previous Haitian leaders, started relying heavily on armed gangs for personnel protection, starting the ever growing issue of gang violence and control. These protection troops were named the "Macoute" and were almost twice the size of the country's military at their peak. The Macoute overthrew then-president Jean-Bertrand in 1991, which led the United States to resize the island once again alongside UN interventionist forces. Despite the international intervention, the situation on the ground did not improve, and to this day, armed groups are powerful political actors throughout Haiti.

Adding to the political and economic instability within the country, Haiti has, for the past decade, been hit by strong earthquakes and hurricanes that are estimated to have killed at least 300.000 civilians, namely the one in 2010. These natural disasters have also led many prisons to be left abandoned, freeing thousands of past gang members. Finally, on the 7th of July 2021, president Jovenel Moise was killed by Colombian mercenaries, sending the country into turmoil once again. The country has not had a president since then.

## Ground Situation in Haiti

Currently, more than 200 armed gangs are operating across the country, with a notable amount of them being concentrated in the capital, Port-Au-Prince, leading to near total gang control over Haiti's economy. Just recently, as BBC reports, heavy gunfire was heard around Haiti's national palace in Port-au-Prince. The gang violence has also attempted to take over Haiti's airports. The gangs are notorious for breaching humanitarian law within Haiti for capital gain by engaging in kidnapping, raiding, and trading basic supplies such as food and water. The UN also reports that women and children are particularly more vulnerable to such gang operations. The rebels control more than half of Haiti's territory and hold vital strategic points within the country, which permits the Haitian military to quickly and effectively remove the gangs off their soil—left with no governance or protection chaos looms over the country, increasing insecurity between citizens and foreign governments which have urged their citizens to leave the country. The government tries to alleviate the effects of conflict as much as possible by aiming to provide necessities to civilians. However, the efforts are insufficient, and many still suffer from a nearly non-existent government. The country is in anarchy, with only the prime minister holding power in bureaucratic positions. Days before being killed, the ex-president of Haiti had declared Ariel Henry as the prime minister, but he, due to the rise of insurgency, could not have been sworn in and appointed by the parliament. Following a short political dispute, however, Ariel Henry re-established his position as the prime minister and, to date, assumes the president's responsibilities as there are none at the moment. After profound protest by the Haitians, Ariel Henry has sworn to re-establish elections, but these elections are being constantly delayed due to the ongoing security crisis. The self-proclaimed presidency of Henry has antagonized him in the face of many Haitians who believe he has no legitimacy over the presidency. The country's institutions have also proved incapable of dealing with the conflict at hand as the government currently has no elected officials because the final ten senators of the country resigned after the expiration of their service. The unorganized government has caused civilians who to advocate for the resignation of Ariel Henry. The power vacuum left by the non-existing government has encouraged many gangs to publicize their efforts in Haiti and make armed attempts to gain territory over the region by attacking the government and other rival gangs in the process. The local population, believing their country is on the verge of collapse, have started carrying out vigilante operations against the rebels, which have proved relatively successful. The government recently established a task force to undertake risky operations to locate and fight off rebels in the capital. Last but not least, the Haitian government has also declared a state of emergency and curfew, which provided rights for police officers to detain more suspects who are deemed to be working in collaboration with armed gangs.

## Foreign and United Nations Aid

Many UN-affiliated humanitarian organizations have worked to provide better conditions for civilians. The World Food Program (WFP) has continued initiatives to buy local food from Haitian farmers and sell it back to the community at low prices. This movement aids the country's economic production and helps many families reach quality food. However, WFP's efforts have been

significantly reduced after armed groups placed roadblocks on critical supply lanes. After the prime minister's call for foreign aid, the UN recognized the severity of the situation in Haiti and approved the country's intervention by armed peacekeeping forces to take back control and restore stability. The approval of the intervention has raised rightful suspicions among the Haitian population, who have previously experienced the negative consequence of foreign interventionism in their years as a colony and under UN control. The distrust for Ariel Henry and his government contributes to the severe suspicions of the people. The Haitian government has not yet authorized the intervention, as many details remain unclear. Still, it is believed that Kenya would lead the armed peacekeeping force, consisting of the armed forces of neighboring Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and the Bahamas. Individual states have also taken measures regarding the situation in Haiti. Most notably, the Dominican Republic has approved the construction of a great border wall on their border with Haiti to stop illegal immigrant flow. The United States of America has also promised over 100 million dollars to the government of Haiti if they allow the UN peacekeeping operation to take place.

### **The Future Ahead**

Haiti, already facing a dispute with armed gangs, also faces internal dispute as recently Guy Phillippe, a previous member of the Haitian police force and a former rebel accused of taking part in the 2004 coup, has been re-sent to Haiti by the United States after spending six years in prison to due money laundering operations. Over the past year, Phillippe has been negotiating with gang leaders and locals throughout the country to spread his ideals of a revolution without any gunfire. Philippe has moreover declared that "the fight is just beginning," referring to the ongoing clashes between armed groups and the government. Guy Phillippe is believed to be supported by the Brigade for the Security of Protected Areas agency. This ex-governmental environmental protection agency organization separated from Ariel Henry's government to follow their ideals. To date, Guy Phillippe and his allies continue their efforts to reclaim and re-unite the Haitian region under one strong independent government via a peaceful transition of power; thereby calling the resignation of Ariel Henry and looking forward to becoming the new president himself. Phillippe is promising stronger connections with major powers, primarily the United States, as he has said: "If Haiti is where it is now, it's partly because of them" (BBC)

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **Haiti:**

Haiti's involvement in its own situation is rooted in a history of political instability, natural disasters, and economic challenges. The country often finds itself in a struggle to address internal issues while navigating the impacts of international aid, intervention, and foreign interests. The country has been without a president since 2021, and the efficiency of governmental institutions is in question. Therefore, the lack of a solid and independent government has led to many groups vying for control.

Gang violence remains a critical problem, with thousands of civilian lives in danger. Recently, amidst the major gang violence which emerged on 29th February 2024, the prime minister Ariel Henry has been unable to return back to Haiti. The current prime minister, Henry, was also due to step down voluntarily in February 20204; however, he has declined to do so, at least until mid-2025.

The country remains in significant political turmoil, with gang violence and governmental corruption amplifying each day. The UN human rights officer has also claimed that the current situation in the country is "beyond untenable." ([Source](#)) More than 1,190 people have been killed just in 2024. In response to this severe bloodshed, many UN officials are calling for a "multinational security force to back up Haiti's beleaguered police and military", ([Source](#)) as they perceive this to be the only feasible and effective solution alternative.

## United States of America

The United States is undoubtedly among the few countries that have been heavily involved in Haiti. Historically, the US has played a significant role in the region, including military interventions and support for various political factions. The US had invaded Haiti in the early 1900s in order to restore political and economic stability after the Haitian president was killed. Haiti had redeemed independence in 1934. However, the US's involvement remained effective. For instance, the US supported the Duvalier regime during the 1960s and 1970s due to its anti-communist stance (which greatly aligned with US's ideals during the Cold War era) despite its authoritarian nature and poor human rights record. Just like other major powers, recently, the US's focus has shifted to humanitarian aid, aimed at improving the living conditions of the Haitian people and curtailing prevalent issues such as gang violence. The US has also been actively involved in disaster relief efforts following natural disasters like the Haiti 2010 earthquake, which led to severe economic downfall and around 250,000 deaths. Just recently, during gang violence problems at the capital, US airlifts have aided embassy personnel.

However, critics argue that the US's approach at times has prioritized American strategic interests and economic benefits over the long-term welfare and autonomy of Haiti. For example, the US military occupation of Haiti in the early 1900s, aimed at stabilizing Haiti and protecting US interests, has been criticized for prioritizing American financial interests, particularly in regards to controlling the Haitian National Bank. The invasion also involved brute force, having led to other criticisms as well. The most recent US invasion occurred in 2004. This US-led force was later replaced by a UN peacekeeping mission that remained until 2019, as per Washington's request.

Recently, the US's involvement remains pervasive. In October 2023, the United Nations Security Council authorized an armed intervention in Haiti to alleviate the power of paramilitary-style gangs in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince and uphold the strength of the Haitian government. The mission has not been in effect just yet, however it is known that it will not be an official UN peacekeeping mission, and instead will be fully organized and funded directly by the United States; hence, reiterating the US's significant involvement in the issue. ([Source](#))

[https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/07/haiti-kenya-invasion-gang-war-united-states/#:~:text=The%20biggest%20and%20longest%20was.mission%20that%20remained%20until%202019=\)](https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/07/haiti-kenya-invasion-gang-war-united-states/#:~:text=The%20biggest%20and%20longest%20was.mission%20that%20remained%20until%202019=))

## France

France's involvement in the issue primarily stems from their long-lasting colonial history as detailed in the General Overview section. Haiti (then Saint-Domingue) was initially colonized by the French. Back then, it became one of the richest colonies in the world, due to slave labor and the heavy production of essentials like sugar and coffee. This exploitation led to the accumulation of significant wealth for France. Yet, on the other hand, the Haitians experienced immense suffering, as enslavement and physical exploitation were pervasive problems. The slave uprising, or the Haitian Revolution which occurred at the end of the 18th century, led to Haiti's independence from France in 1804, becoming the first successful slave rebellion leading to the establishment of a sovereign nation.

However, France's involvement did not end with that. As stated before France imposed indemnity on Haiti, demanding compensation for the loss of slaves and property, which significantly indebted Haiti to French banks and slowed down its economic development. Just recently, France's involvement in Haiti is more concerned with diplomatic relations. France is involved in numerous humanitarian aid projects in Haiti, often through collaborating with non-governmental organizations and relevant UN bodies. Despite these contributions, calls for reparations and apologies for France's colonial abuses and the imposition of the 1825 indemnity have been ongoing topics of discussion.

## Dominican Republic

As Figure 1 displays, the Dominican Republic and Haiti are neighbors, given that they are the sole countries on the shared island of Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic has been inevitably vulnerable to the escalating violence and political turmoil in Haiti as border insecurities and mass migrations escalated. Thus, the Dominican Republic has been taking steps to manage the impact of Haiti's challenges on its own territory. Primarily, the country has reinforced its border security in the endeavor to prevent the spillover of violence and manage the flow of migrants. To do so, the country has announced the construction of a border wall 2021, aimed at curbing illegal crossing and smuggling activities. Additionally, the Dominican Republic has engaged in diplomatic efforts to address the crisis, by participating in regional discussions. The Dominican government has called for international intervention to stabilize Haiti and has been involved in talks within platforms such as the Organization of American States (OAS).



Figure 1: Map  
Source: <https://alearningfamily.com/main/wp-content/uploads/DomRepHaitiPolitical.jpg>

## Timeline of Events

<b>7 February 2001</b>	Haiti selects its first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.
<b>2004</b>	Aristide gets overthrown by a military coup, restored to power by external powers, and gets forced out of office once again due to corruption allegations.
<b>1 June 2004</b>	A UN Peacekeeping Stabilization Mission is established in Haiti.
<b>12 January 2010</b>	Haiti Earthquake takes place, devastating millions and killing around 200,000 people.
<b>4 October 2016</b>	Hurricane Matthew hits Haiti
<b>7 February 2017</b>	Jovenel Moïse gets elected as the president of Haiti
<b>2017-2021</b>	Political uprising increases in Haiti following corruption allegations towards Moïse.
<b>7 July 2021</b>	Jovenel Moïse gets assassinated. Prime Minister Ariel Henry starts serving as both the Acting President and Prime Minister.
<b>14 August 2021</b>	Haiti gets hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake.
<b>March 2024</b>	Gang leader Jimmy “Barbeque” Chérizier took over Haiti.



## UN Involvement & Relevant UN Documents

- [United Nations Security Council 2700](#) (S/RES/2700): This resolution is on the arms embargo towards Haiti, reaffirming the prevention of weapon supply from outside sources to the country.
- [United Nations Security Council 2699](#) (S/RES/2699): This resolution authorized member states to form and deploy a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission to Haiti to help re-establish security in the country and build conditions conducive to holding free and fair elections.
- [United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti Report of the Secretary-General](#) (S/2021/559): The present report is submitted consequently to Security Council resolution 2547 (2020), in accordance with Council resolution 2476 (2019), by which it had established BINUH and requested the Secretary General to report on the implementation of the resolution every 120 days. The report provides an update on the implementation of the BINUH mandate.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In the past, UN missions and foreign intervention have been used to try to resolve political problems in Haiti. However, following these interventions, foreign influence persisted, leading to ongoing foreign meddling in Haiti's domestic affairs throughout its history. Political institutions within Haiti have to be properly established in order to radically solve the problem and ensure the sustainability of civil rest.

Addressing the humanitarian side of the issue, most parties have focused on providing aid and funds. It is important to acknowledge the role non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the aid they provide play in ensuring that people can continue to maintain their standard of living. However, due to this, Haiti is now in a position where it requires assistance to sustain itself. Without proper governance by the Haitian government, the current system puts people in a precarious situation because of the risk of losing essential resources in the event that gangs obstruct aid or non-governmental organizations suspend services due to the political situation in the nation.

## Notes from the Chair

- <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15345.doc.htm>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/10/haiti-gang-boss-kingpin-barbecue-jimmy-che-rizier>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-68686298>