Haiti's Endless Crisis

26 MARCH 2026

Jonathan Lott and Artur Rath



by Jonathan Lott and Artur Rath

In summer 2024, Jonathan Lott wrote an EPIS brief, Haiti in Crisis: Gang Warfare and Disputed Territory, profiling the nation's security challenges in advance of a Kenya-led police mission aiming to stabilize the country. That brief explained the origins of Haiti's ongoing non-international armed conflict, some of its political and military dimensions, and the humanitarian consequences for the beleaguered state at the time. The present brief is a retrospective on Haiti in the 20 months since, and the crisis that lies ahead.

The situation in Haiti has not improved since 2024. The country, with a population of 12 million, is now grappling with the throes of prolonged gang warfare. Initially, hostilities were mainly affecting the neighborhoods

of Port-au-Prince. The atrocities committed by the gangs years ago—sexual slavery, mutilations, indiscriminate killing—remain serious problems for the country. In recent months, gang warfare has expanded beyond the capital, to the suburbs and countryside. Also, the means and methods of warfare have spread and evolved.

Like many of the world's modern conflict zones, drones are remaking the battlefield. Explosive quadcopters are targeting urban strongholds that would ordinarily be too dangerous to approach on foot. Some of these have been supported by Vectus Global, a private military company based in the U.S. An average drone strike from the government-aligned forces (the "Task Force") kills 8.8 people.

A recent report from Human Rights Watch indicates that drone strikes launched from Haitian security forces and their allies hit record levels in November 2025, and set new monthly records (for their strikes and for kills) in the two months that followed. Over 1,200 people were slain in the 11-month period studied, including 60 who were believed not to have been associated with any criminal gangs. The vast majority of these strikes have occurred in the capital. The figures of the New York Times suggest a grim reality of the brutal struggle, with over 16,000 people across the country having been killed since 2022. Moreover, according to the UN, there is strong evidence that the gangs have recently started recruiting children and minors for their armed operations.

The gangs have also exploited the political vacuum to reorganize their activities to ensure they effectively control large parts of the country. The principal armed group, G9, formerly an alliance of convenience among several gang groups in and around Port-Au-Prince, has now reformed under a new name: Viv Amsanm (Haitian creole for "Live Together"). The reorganized gang now entered into a coalition with another called Gran Grif ("Big Grip") which is notorious for conducting some attacks in the suburbs and countryside.

The gang coalition Viv Ansanm and Gran Grif have been designated as terrorist groups by the U.S. government. The designation empowers the U.S. to use various financial sanctions, bans, and accountability mechanisms against both groups. For instance, some gang leaders have had bounties put on their heads, notably Jimmy Cherizier, better known by his *nom de guerre* "Barbecue," has since seen a $5 million bounty placed on his arrest, though critics claim that the U.S. has not provided police forces on the ground with the resources to trace and apprehend Cherizier—a former policeman himself. Several raids have been mounted against Barbecue's alleged headquarters, but he remains at large.

The current political situation in Haiti is dire. The country has lacked a President for almost five years now. The July 2021 assasination of Jovenel Moïse, then the President of Haiti, precipitated this bottomless crisis in which Haiti remains trapped.. Moïse was slain by a group of mercenaries, mostly Colombians with a few Haitians mixed in. Who hired them, and why,

remains uncertain but in the past few weeks, a Florida-based trial has begun to uncover evidence suspecting four men accused of conspiring to kidnap and assassinate the former president.

In April 2024, a Transitional Presidential Council was set up with little success, as their first interim leader brought in with UN support was ousted after six months. In the weeks before the mandate of the Transitional Presidential Council was set to expire in February 2026, the body tried to force out the Prime Minister, Alix Didier Fils-Aimé. Although U.S. diplomatic efforts kept Fils-Aimé in power, he now struggles to govern a fractured state. Elections are being planned for August, but it is unlikely that the country will be stable enough to hold credible elections—their first in a decade.

Haiti is also confronted with a range of economic issues that have not seen improvement in recent years. The currency, the Haitian Gourde, has seen annual inflation at over 30%. In 2024, approximately $2.8B USD of remittance money flowed into Haiti. In 2026 a 1% tax began being implemented on remittances sent from the U.S. To make things worse for the country's economy, President Trump's return to the White House has prioritized the removal of illegal aliens, as well as the removal of TPS (temporary protected status) from various groups of asylees, refugees, and other foreign nationals from the United States, impacting refugees and asylum seekers from Haiti. In March 2026, a federal appeals court ruled against Trump's attempt to remove TPS from some 350,000 Haitians in the U.S.; the issue is currently being appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Dominican Republic is also increasing efforts to deport Haitians, setting a target of 10,000 per week.

The risk of removal of hundreds of thousands of Haitians would more greatly endanger the fragile Haitian economy as their remittances will not support the island's nation economy. Approximately 26% of Haiti's economy is supported by remittance payments, mostly from the U.S. The UN already placed Haiti in its top seven countries most affected by hunger. As of March 2026, the IPC indicates 5.9M people in Haiti are facing Phase 3 or 4 levels of famine. This means that the reduction of remittances could potentially even worsen this crisis. Tourism in Haiti has also plummeted since the beginning of the instability. This is mainly due to U.S. airlines facing flight bans in travelling over Port-Au-Prince and the suspension of all flights of French airlines until further notice. Cruise line companies have also suspended their activities on the island because of the risk of violence. As an article of Le Monde points out, former popular holiday resorts of American and French tourists are now mainly empty and the local population has to rely on fishing to earn income.

Beyond facing security and economic issues, the local population remains highly critical of the series of the transitional governments failing to get a grip on the escalation of gang warfare. Public electricity supply was already fragile due poor infrastructure and extreme weather events, but since 2024 major blackouts have occurred because the local population decided

to dismantle infrastructure to protest against government inaction against gangs. In late May 2025, protesters and civil society activists occupied and dismantled the country's largest hydroelectric plant, causing a near total blackout in the capital Port-au-Prince that endured for several months. The protesters claimed that this was a means of pressure against the government that failed to protect them from gangs and insecurity.

However, the actions were met with outrage from the government, with the public utility company Électricité de Haiti claiming sabotage. Even before the protesters, the utility company had to ration electricity supplies in major cities. In the capital, people are adapting their lifestyles to the blackout by installing solar panels, but overall businesses and many families have been heavily impacted by both gang crime and the total blackout.

Since last year, the UN has been making efforts to stabilize the situation in some parts of the country. In September 2025, the UN renewed the police stabilization mission for another twelve months, and authorized a doubling of its size. International cooperation also resulted in the deployment of a Kenyan-led multinational security force. According to France24, both UN and U.S. led mission objectives have failed, as the Haitian police don't have the means to effectively fight against the gangs and the Kenyan police-soldiers have had little effectiveness. The short-term objective of the U.S. is to organize the election by reinforcing the Kenya-led mission, with countries such as Canada and Japan contributing in the future.

Challenges gathering intelligence and developing a coherent and unifying strategy remain. Noteworthy results from the multinational police force have yet to materialize, since gains have been few and Viv Ansanm still holds about 90% of the capital. Areas that were once cleared by the police have since fallen back into gang hands, and gang forces have also penetrated into areas that were previously considered as safe. If the UN and allied forces don't change their strategy and implementation, the ultimate outcome is unlikely to change.