



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

GANGS OF HAITI

Expansion, power and
an escalating crisis

October 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was researched and written by a Haitian research team who wish to remain anonymous for security reasons. The interviews published in this report were carried out during 2021 by a second team of local researchers, who also wish to remain anonymous for security reasons. The report was complemented by research and writing by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's Summer Walker and Maria Velandia. We would like to thank Mark Shaw for his review of this report and the GI-TOC Publications team.

© 2022 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted
in any form or by any means without permission in writing from
the Global Initiative.

Cover: © Ricardo Arduengo/AFP via Getty Images

Please direct inquiries to:
The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
Avenue de France 23
Geneva, CH-1202
Switzerland
www.globalinitiative.net

CONTENTS

Acronyms and abbreviations	2
Summary.....	3
Gangs and politics	5
Role of armed groups in Haitian politics	5
Relations between gangs and the political class	8
Electoral services	10
Violent services	10
Gangs in contemporary Haiti: A spreading crisis	12
Expansion, conflict and alliance building.....	12
Mapping major gangs and alliances	16
Conclusion	20
Notes	21

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BSAP	Brigade de Surveillance des Aires Protégées
CEP	Provisional Electoral Council
CIMO	Corps d'Intervention et de Maintien de l'Ordre
CNDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Dismantlement and Reintegration
CSCCA	Cour Supérieure des Comptes et du Contentieux Administratif
FRG9	Revolutionary Force G9
GIPNH (SWAT)	Groupe d'Intervention de la Police Nationale Haïtienne.
G9	Criminal federation of nine gangs
Lavalas	Fanmi Lavalas, political party
MINUJUSTH	United Nations Mission in Support of Justice in Haiti
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
PetroCaribe	Oil agreement between Caribbean countries and Venezuela
PHTK	Haitian Tèt Kale Party
HNP	Haitian National Police
RNDDH	National Human Rights Defense Network
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSN	Volunteers for National Security



SUMMARY

The growth of gang violence in Haiti has been a major concern in recent years. Years of political dysfunction in the Caribbean country have combined with deteriorating economic conditions, the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, to create a weakening of state power. Under these conditions, gangs have multiplied, joined up forces and asserted authority in an increasingly destructive manner.

In the last five years, gangs have grown rapidly in number, expanding their territories and tightening their control over Haiti's political and economic infrastructure. They have established themselves as the mercenary partners of politicians and state administrators, as mafia-style armed groups profiting from the private sector and as the local coordinators of international criminal networks. There are now an estimated 200 gangs operating across Haiti, and around 95 in the capital, Port-au-Prince, alone.¹ This has resulted in a major insecurity crisis, with large-scale attacks on communities, politicians and journalists, high levels of violence, mass kidnappings and large-scale forced displacements.

Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean. Income inequality is among the highest in the region, with the richest 20 per cent holding over 64 per cent of the country's wealth, while the poorest 20 per cent own barely one per cent of national wealth.² Long-standing international debts, government corruption, a three-year embargo by the United States from 1991³ and a series of natural disasters have all contributed to undermine economic growth. The 2010 earthquake caused roughly US\$8 billion in damage, while the destruction from Hurricane Matthew in 2016 came to US\$1.9 billion – the equivalent of that year's national budget.

Later, between 2017 and 2021, the Haitian parliament ground to a halt: no major laws were passed and only one budget under regular conditions was voted on. Public administration came to a standstill due to the government's inability to pay its staff. This had serious consequences for national healthcare, education and security. Alongside this, judicial positions were not filled, prosecutors stopped filing charges, and suspects sat in jail as trials collapsed.⁴ In 2019, the government failed to hold elections, and President Jovenel Moïse dissolved parliament, seeking to rule by decree until his assassination in July 2021.⁵ The result has been an accelerated deterioration in the living conditions for the population, especially among the working class, with the slum areas characterized by a dearth of basic social services.

In the absence of effective state power, political figures across the spectrum have employed gangs as a form of hired muscle. Gangs routinely act on behalf of government and opposition figures to control key urban areas by suppressing dissent through assassinations, kidnappings and massacres; influencing the outcome of elections through bribery and intimidation; and disrupting political opponents by fomenting protests and destroying polling stations in districts where their candidate is set to lose.



Degenerating infrastructure. A view of Léogâne portal, an area of Port-au-Prince reportedly controlled by a gang belonging to the G9 federation. © Pierre Michel Jean/The Washington Post via Getty Images

Gangs have also captured large swathes of Haiti's economy. They not only profit from kidnapping, raiding businesses and stealing food, fuel and other supplies, but have also taken control of key areas of economic activity – drawing revenue from customs, public markets, water and electricity distribution networks, and bus and *tap-tap* stations.⁶ The gangs largely control the exits and entrances to metropolitan areas, including major roads in and out of Port-au-Prince, which provide access to strategic infrastructure such as ports, oil terminals, the commercial and industrial districts, and Toussaint Louverture International Airport.⁷ Public institutions and private sector groups operating in these territories are forced to pay protection money to permit them to operate.

Many of the gangs are small local groups, but recently they have begun to coalesce into larger structures. In 2020, the G9 was formed by a former police officer bringing together nine powerful gangs in Port-au-Prince linked to the ruling political party, and gradually expanded its connections with smaller gangs. In the capital, this coalition building has also resulted in inter-gang rivalry. G-Pep, a gang coalition loosely linked to opposition parties,⁸ has increasingly come into conflict with G9 in the Cité Soleil suburb. Other gangs are said to be so popular they have waiting lists for recruits to join, such as 400 Mawozo,⁹ which – following the extradition of its leader to the United States – has allegedly joined the G-Pep coalition. These groups are multiplying, and creating formal and informal alliances.

This report assesses the current situation of the gang threat in Haiti, looking specifically at the relationships between organized crime and politics. It addresses the historical relationship between politics, armed groups and gangs, and the political economy of gangs in the present day. It does not seek to assess the international response, but rather contribute to our understanding of the political economy of gangs in Haiti. The report summarizes several of the main gangs and coalitions in Port-au-Prince, including a map indicating their estimated territorial control. The eyewitness accounts of people living in gang-afflicted areas provide a first-hand impression of how gang violence and gang control have impacted the lives of communities living in Haiti's ganglands.

A timeline published separately provides an overview of the historical and sociopolitical evolution of Haitian armed groups and their activities from the 1950s to the present: see <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/GITOC-Gangs-of-Haiti-Timeline.pdf>.



GANGS AND POLITICS

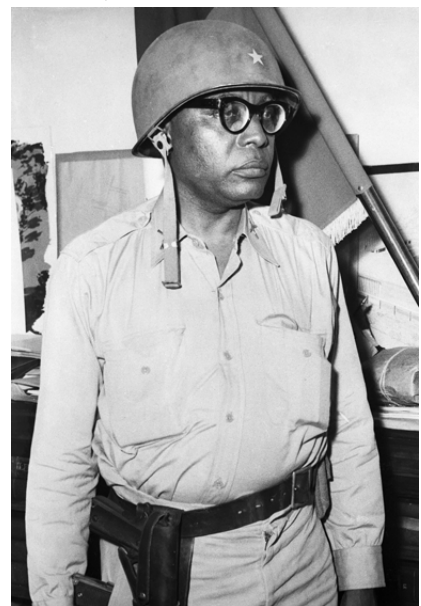
Role of armed groups in Haitian politics

The deployment of non-state armed groups has been a core component of Haitian politics since the 1950s. Following an unsuccessful military coup against President François (Papa Doc) Duvalier in 1958, Duvalier sought to bypass the armed forces by creating a personal militia, the Tonton Macoutes,¹⁰ (which later became known as the Volunteers for National Security (VSN)). Through the 'Macoutes', the Duvaliers deployed brutal state-sponsored violence to suppress opponents of the regime. It served as the basis of the Duvalier family's power until their overthrow (his son succeeded him as president).

However, even after the removal of Jean-Claude Duvalier in February 1986, Haiti has endured a turbulent politic environment marked by continual coups, deeply contested elections, mass protests, accusations of fraud and unrelenting violence over the decades. Political parties and leaders have often had informal armed groups at their disposal to intimidate opponents and their voters, as well as to disrupt political rallies and the electoral process. Armed groups have been involved in massacres, attacks on labour strikes or peasant uprisings, and politically motivated assassinations for various leaders and parties ever since Duvalier's reign.

Efforts have been made over the years to disband certain armed groups – and even the armed forces – but a failure to disarm them effectively allowed for their resurgence. For instance, in 1986 the Macoutes were disbanded by the National Council of Government but never disarmed, such that they continued to operate informally and re-emerge as far-right vigilantes. This mistake was repeated in 1994 when President Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to power. Aristide outlawed the pro-Duvalier paramilitary groups and the Haitian armed forces but did not fully address issues such as disarmament, military pensions or retraining former soldiers. Once again, this caused them to morph into informal armed groups.

Between 1994 and 2004, armed groups made up of former soldiers continued to operate as an anti-Aristide insurgency. In the capital, young people from the working-class neighbourhoods associated with Aristide's Lavalas political movement set up local self-defence groups – or *baz* – to protect themselves against attacks by groups of



President François Duvalier in 1958.

© Bettmann Archive/Getty Images

former soldiers. Over the years, these youth gangs were fused with the state police to form a group at the service of Aristide and Fanmi Lavalas – the social-democratic political party that arose from the movement. These gangs took control of the communes of Cité Soleil, the Saline neighbourhoods and the Croix des Bossales market. Initially militants acting on behalf of the Lavalas party, they increasingly became independent agents forming a de facto leadership in the slums of Port-au-Prince.

Following the 2010 earthquake, many self-defence groups were overtaken by younger, less politically motivated gangs who were more likely to raid other gang territories to fight for turf.¹¹ These loosely organized groups, made up of young people from fragile neighbourhoods, have developed into established gangs.

In 2022, there are an estimated 200 gangs in operation across Haiti, with nearly 100 in Port-au-Prince.¹² These gangs cover a large proportion of the national territory. They are present in approximately 63 communes (or incorporated municipalities), including strategic communes for electoral, economic, drug trafficking and smuggling purposes such as Port-au-Prince, Pétion Ville, Ile de la Tortue, Corail, Ouanaminthe and Croix des Bouquets.

The current gang crisis draws on the historic deployment of armed groups for political purposes, but it is an emerging phenomenon and threat in its own right. Gangs are becoming a central organizing force for young people, they are heavily armed, and largely driven by profit and power, rather than political ideology. At the same time, their connection to the political economy persists.



Residents fleeing gang-infested Martissant are temporarily sheltered in a sports complex, October 2021. © Richard Pierrin/AFP via Getty Images

EVOLUTION OF HAITI'S ARMED GROUP PHENOMENON



Ruth (Martissant)

Ruth (not her real name), a 19 year-old, lived in Martissant until 2 June 2021. She and several thousand others were forced to leave because of armed gangs in the Grand Ravine neighbourhood who killed, raped and burned down houses. 'A six-month-old baby was ripped from his mother's arms and trampled to death by armed men,' said Ruth, who was rehoused with her family to Carrefour-Feuilles.

Months later, several hundred families in Martissant were still sleeping in reception centres, in public squares or taking refuge in their home province. Schools have been relocated, including Ruth's. 'I did all my classes there,' says Ruth. 'It was a peaceful neighbourhood. Everything changed over the last three years with the gang conflicts. But on 2 June last year, it became terrifying when the gangs of Grand Ravine attacked those of Ti Bwa, resulting in horrific deaths,' she recalled. 'I lost friends ... my best memories are from there.'

According to Ruth, the authorities let the situation fester until they lost control. 'The nonchalance of the authorities has allowed the proliferation of gangs.' She does not want to opine on the links between gangs and politics, but

intimated that elected officials rubbed shoulders with gunmen in her neighbourhood.

Ruth explained that her neighbourhood of Martissant 2A had always been spared from the bloody clashes, which always occurred in Grand Ravine. Later, the gangs would come down to commit kidnappings and hijack trucks. 'One gang leader, reportedly, sometimes prevented attacks, including preventing armed bandits from Grand Ravine from kidnapping and hijacking trucks on the national road in Martissant. He often received the support of police vehicles to repel the Grand Ravine gang during clashes,' said the young girl. This is corroborated by other former residents of Martissant.

Ruth believes that these neighbourhoods, including Martissant, need more attention from the authorities, including certain basic service provision and paid work to prevent young people from falling into delinquency. 'Only if more attention is paid to the vulnerable classes can we hope for a better country,' said Ruth. 'Armed conflicts prevent any civic initiative in a neighbourhood where gangs are armed and formidable.' ■

Relations between gangs and the political class

As we have seen, there has been a long-standing close link between armed groups and political elites in Haiti. In the current context, gangs work with politicians and parliamentarians – both those in power and the opposition – to exert violent control over strategic areas and communities.

The political class in Haiti is dominated by three main political groups: the PHTK (Parti Haïtien Tèt Kale), the ruling party since 2011, bringing together neo-Duvalierists and former elected officials from the Fanmi Lavalas party; secondly, the Prévalisme movement, bringing together disaffected members of Fanmi Lavalas, left-wing and centre-right parties associated with workers organizations and private sector groups involved in national production; and, thirdly, the Lavalas movement, predominantly drawn from the urban youth and marginalized urban poor. During the last 20 years, these three major groups have dominated institutions such as the Electoral Council, the Superior Council of the Judiciary, the Superior Court of Accounts and financial institutions.



Haitians react after the assassination of President Moïse, 8 July 2021. © Richard Pierrin/Getty Images

A major trend in recent years has been the emergence of a new category of politician: the Pol-businessmen, i.e., politicians who do business (some through legal businesses and others through illicit activity). This group consists mostly of deputies and senators from the middle class and peasantry. They are considered the new economic and political force in the country (for instance they include former leaders of PHTK), but, generally, they are not looked upon favourably by the public. From 2014 onwards, their rise encouraged others from the private sector to invest in control of parliament while developing relationships with the most influential political bosses. Overall, this has contributed to the decline in political party platforms and the rise of the self-interested politician.

Corruption has played a major role in undermining the state. The 2018 PetroCaribe scandal has been the most recent high-profile case.³⁵ Through the PetroCaribe alliance, Haiti was able to import Venezuelan oil but defer payment for up to 25 years, freeing up revenue to develop the economy and fund social programmes. While government officials claimed they had funded 400 projects totalling US\$4 billion, Haitians felt there was little to show for it. The scandal sparked mass protests. Moïse himself was head of Agritrans, a banana company that was paid around US\$700 000 to repair roads. An audit in 2017 requested by the Senate found evidence of corruption over the course of three administrations and, when the government attempted to increase fuel prices a year later, protests broke out and lasted for months.³⁶ In 2020, Haiti's High Court of Auditors released a report claiming US\$2 billion was mismanaged from 2008 to 2016, affirming earlier allegations.³⁷

The political battle between the opposition and the government between 2018 and 2021 has benefited the gangs, which use this to their advantage. There has been a proliferation of gangs since 2018 in Port-au-Prince and the country's major cities. In particular, there are allegations that Moïse allowed the G9 and its affiliated gangs to gain power in Port-au-Prince by granting impunity to cause harm in opposition-dominated neighbourhoods.³⁸ Many of these gangs have since been operating with impunity and claim to belong to certain political groups, both in power and in opposition.

Electoral services

Gangs have developed a strong presence in municipalities with strategic electoral importance. In the 63 communes where gangs have taken hold, they have begun to dominate town halls in preparation for elections. Two of the most important town halls in the West department,³⁹ namely Pétion Ville and Port-au-Prince, are linked to the G9 gang and its allies. As a result, it is estimated that gangs now control more than 3.5 million voters. Growing gangs like 400 Mawozo control communes with a combined total of approximately 950 000 voters, while G9 can influence about 2 million.

Gangs provide six main electoral 'services' to political actors:

- Campaigning – they distribute leaflets in their neighbourhoods for candidates during elections and in polling stations on election day.
- Voter intimidation – because of their knowledge on the ground in their respective neighbourhoods and territories they lobby from door-to-door among the inhabitants, sometimes forcing people to vote for a particular candidate by showing up at the voting centres.
- Bribery – making cash or in-kind donations to voters on behalf of certain candidates during the campaign and on voting day.
- Fundraising – gangs have been known to raise money for certain candidates' campaigns by extorting businessmen and notables in territories they control.
- Vandalism – including ballot stuffing in favour of their candidates and destroying polling stations in areas where their political paymasters are set to lose.
- Disruption – organizing protests for their candidates and suppressing the rallies of opponents.

Violent services

Assassinations and mass violence have often been used to repress popular uprisings or to achieve political objectives over decades in Haiti. The National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) has reported at least 16 massacres in the West department since 2018, some involving up to 500 deaths.⁴⁰ The massacres perpetrated in the Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods of La Saline, Bel Air, Tokyo and Delmas 32 between 2018 and 2021 resulted in slowing down popular mobilization in the country following outrage over the PetroCaribe funding scandal and contestations over President Moïse's constitutional term, which was widely perceived to have expired. While he stayed in power, the PetroCaribe movement began to call for Moïse's resignation. La Saline, a peripheral district of downtown Port-au-Prince wedged between Cité Soleil and the popular market of Croix des Bossales, is a bastion of resistance against the PHTK regime. According to local human rights groups, it was a strategic zone during the popular mobilizations over the PetroCaribe scandal and many believe the 2018 massacre there was meant to send a message to the opposition.⁴¹



Gangsters in Port-au-Prince's Cité Soleil area. © Alpeyrie/ullstein bild via Getty Images

Opposition figures use their own affiliates to further their political agendas. The series of 'country locks' – a term referring to mass protests, roadblocks and strikes – organized over the last three years to force the resignation of Moïse, were carried out in collusion with gangs close to opposition political actors throughout the country and particularly in the capital.⁴²



GANGS IN CONTEMPORARY HAITI: A SPREADING CRISIS

While gangs have a clear link to the political class and elites, they are now challenging their role as subordinates. Since the assassination of Moïse (not attributed to a Haitian gang), gang members have asserted themselves as self-proclaimed community leaders and flexed their power through public demonstrations. G9 and affiliates held up fuel distribution for weeks in 2021 demanding that Prime Minister Ariel Henry resign, showing their ability to significantly disrupt the economy. They have carried out brazen attacks on the leadership, including preventing Henry from commemorating a national holiday by blocking access with heavily armed men and gunfire.⁴³ There was a shoot-out between Henry's security team and gangs in the northern city of Gonaïves in January 2022.⁴⁴ Attacks on police stations and other outposts have become more frequent, seemingly as part of a deliberate campaign to undermine what little remains of the state security apparatus and to secure additional firearms.

While this disconnect between the state (the gangs' 'masters') and the gangs grows, they are causing extreme levels of violence and insecurity for the people of Haiti. Gender-based violence has been pervasive, with many cases documented during gang attacks, but also in shelters and makeshift areas for displaced persons.⁴⁵ Violence and insecurity have caused massive internal displacement. From June to November 2021, a reported 13 000 were forced from their homes in Port-au-Prince due to gang violence.⁴⁶

Gangs engage in full-scale disruption of economic activity. Not only do they kidnap for ransom, attack businesses, steal food, fuel and other supplies, but they have seized control of key areas of economic activity, and continue to fight to maintain control of these areas. This includes major roads in and out of Port-au-Prince, secondary major roads, the commercial district of Port-au-Prince and the industrial zone, especially the warehouses and factories along the road to the Toussaint Louverture International Airport.⁴⁷

Expansion, conflict and alliance building

The last five years have been marked by the expansion of armed groups throughout Haiti, especially in vulnerable communities in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Some gangs, such as 400 Mawozo, are said to be so popular they have recruitment waiting lists. Armed groups are multiplying and forming alliances to strengthen and broaden their control over public administration, strategic economic territories and the population.



Community members protest against a spike in gang-related violence. © Richard Pierrin/AFP via Getty Images

In 2020, the G9 was formed by nine powerful gangs in Port-au-Prince linked to the ruling PHTK party, and since then has continued to absorb others. Coalition building in the capital has also intensified inter-gang rivalry. G-Pep, formed to counter the activities of G9, has increasingly come into conflict with the latter in the Cité Soleil suburb, with one such clash in July 2022 resulting in the deaths of 50 people.⁴⁸ G-Pep has incorporated 400 Mawozo after the extradition of its leader to the United States. Such coalition building is seen as a step towards expansion from the capital into other regions of Haiti.

In the past, gangs tended to remain within their neighbourhood limits. However, throughout the country, and more specifically in the communes of Cité Soleil, Delmas, Croix des Bouquets and in the neighbourhoods of Martissant and Bel Air, violent confrontations between rival gangs are becoming increasingly frequent, with serious consequences for the civilian population. These conflicts have also been used by gangs as a cover for the intentional killing of civilians. The Bel Air massacre of 1 April 2021, for instance, was blamed on an inter-gang confrontation but has also been labelled political. Such incidents result in numerous deaths and injuries, and cause mass displacements.

Attacks on journalists trying to bring attention to the crisis have become commonplace. Two journalists were killed in Cité Soleil in September 2022;⁴⁹ earlier, two others were killed in January 2022 in the Laboule 12 neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince, an area where gangs are fighting for territorial control due to the strategic asset of its second major road, which leads to the south of the country (the main road is already controlled by gangs).⁵⁰ This followed the June 2021 murder of 15 people, including journalist Diego Charles and opposition activist Antoinette Duclair, in Port-au-Prince.⁵¹ Abductions have surged, including the kidnapping of entire bus-loads of local people. Haitians across all strata of society are victims, with nearly 800 recorded kidnappings from January to October 2021.⁵² Foreigners have been seized for ransom, such as the 17 US and Canadian missionaries in October 2021 by 400 Mawozo.

Louis (Fontamara)

Louis (not his real name) lived for 30 years in Fontamara, which borders Martissant at the southern entrance of Port-au-Prince. Broken pavements, open sewers, bullet holes in the facades of houses, abandoned vehicles, gangs armed with assault rifles standing guard – these have been the defining features of Martissant for several months.

Fontamara used to be a peaceful residential area before uncontrolled urbanization sent it spiralling into decline. It is not unplanned urbanization, however, that forced Louis, a professor, to flee his home, but the gangs. He left in 2021. That year, Martissant became one of the capital's most dangerous neighbourhoods for residents. 'Three gangs have been fighting for about three years in Martissant. These are the Grand Ravine gang, the Ti Bwa gang and the fearsome Village de Dieu gang (a.k.a. 5 Seconds gang). Territories were lost to the Ti Bwa gang on 2 June in bloody clashes with Grand Ravine.'

Since then, the situation has remained tense, said Louis, who had not been able to go downtown for several weeks because of armed gang conflicts. 'Several hundred families in Martissant and Fontamara found themselves on the street one morning. The gangs have also killed all the economic activities in the area, by kidnapping people and holding them for ransom. They have blocked access to the petroleum terminals, which has had serious consequences for hospitals and all sectors of national life.'

'The road from Martissant to Carrefour is in very bad condition. The Ministry of Public Works has done nothing to

improve the situation. For security reasons, no worker wants to risk his life on this stretch of road,' he explained. 'Because of the gangs, schools that used to provide free education for children have been closed or relocated. No community association can work in such an atmosphere. This situation has unimaginable consequences.'

According to Louis, there are no local initiatives that protect the community from gangs: 'Many neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince, in other cities and in remote corners of the country used to have brigades to fight crime,' he recalled. 'But, because the gangs are so heavily armed today, it has become difficult to take these initiatives. The state should set up social assistance programmes and vocational schools, and create income-generating activities for young people in working-class neighbourhoods. Vulnerability is at the root of this banditry.'

Louis argues that the close connections between politicians and gangs are an obstacle to fighting the phenomenon effectively: 'It is difficult to fight gangs when police or political authorities are in collusion with them. Local forces are not sufficiently trained or equipped to fight this scale of organized crime. If there are no adequate responses, the political and security situation is likely to get worse in the coming years,' he warned, denouncing the 'passivity' of the international community in the face of the deteriorating security situation in Haiti in recent years. ■

Conflicts between rival gangs over territory are fought over economic resources. In strategic areas, such as ports and oil terminals, businesses are forced to deal with gangs for the survival of their businesses, and thus they are highly lucrative areas for gangs to control. Gangs not only profit from kidnapping, raiding businesses and stealing fuel and other supplies, but have also taken control of key areas of economic activity – drawing revenue from customs, public markets, water and electricity distribution networks, and public-transport stations. The gangs now largely control roads in and out of Port-au-Prince, which provide access to strategic infrastructure, such as ports, oil terminals, the commercial and industrial districts and the airport.⁵³ Public institutions and private sector groups

operating in these territories are routinely forced to pay protection money to allow them to operate. In working-class neighbourhoods gangs have even been known to seize shipments of food products for supposed redistribution to their communities under the guise of humanitarian and social action. These acts of 'largesse' to the communities under their control are intended to boost loyalty, while increasing their vulnerability and economic dependence.

FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS

Fabie and Lyne (Bel Air)

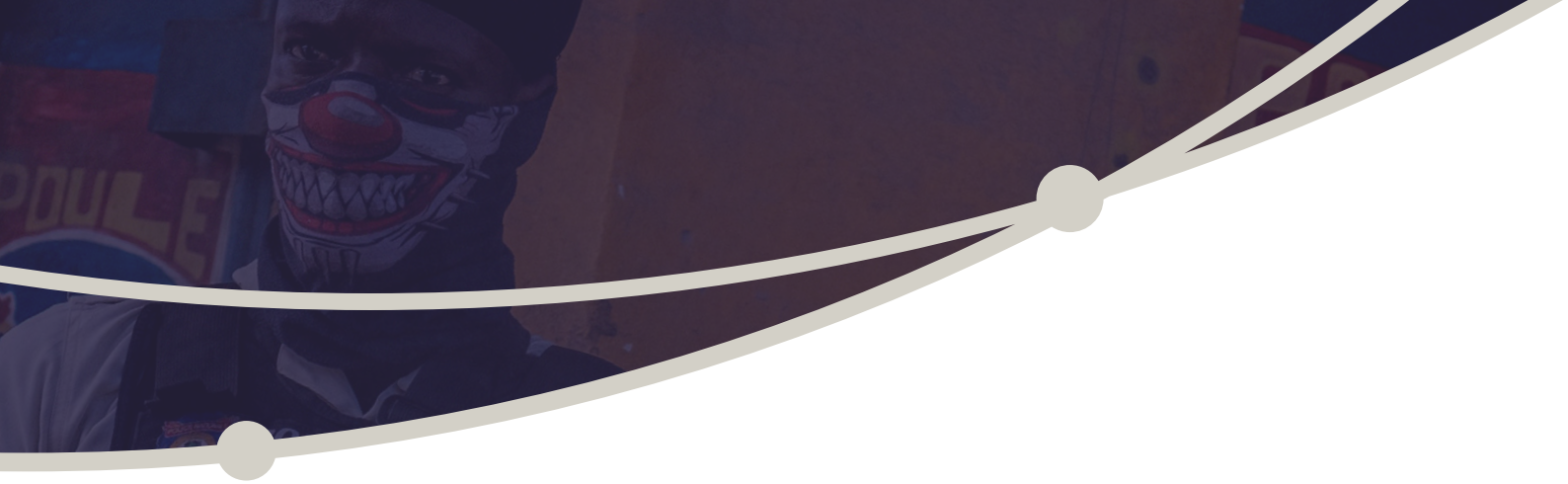
The women of Bel Air, as in other Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods, face very high risk of sexual violence. Fabie (not her real name), 20, is one of the victims. In 2020, on her way home from school, she was sexually assaulted by men with guns. 'I couldn't identify them because they put a black bag over my head,' she said. 'I was not taken to hospital afterwards. Three months later, I realized I was pregnant. I did not want to have an abortion. Now I have a little girl on my hands whose father I will never know. I don't work, and my father can't work either after he was shot in the foot. [Fabie's father, a bricklayer, was shot twice a few months prior.] I was forced to do housework to pay for food,' said Fabie. 'Embarrassed by the situation, my father forbade me to continue.' She had to delay school because of the fees. 'I have a daughter. I am her mother and also her father. My older sister helps me as much as she can,' she said.

'It used to be so nice to live in Bel Air. It was a peaceful neighbourhood. We couldn't accept that young people now didn't go to school. The enemy gang attacks anyone who sets foot in its territory. They burn young people alive and

sometimes send the videos to the victims' families.' Because of the gangs in Bel Air, a health centre that served vulnerable groups had to close, she explained.

Lyne (not her real name), 18, was born and raised in Bel Air. When conflict broke out between two gangs, armed men burned down houses, and killed and raped residents. She was attacked one night in her home. 'Since then, I am not myself anymore. I'm afraid of men.' Lyne, who lost three of her friends, said, 'The situation has led me to smoke and sometimes drink.' Since her attack, Lyne has been living with a friend who is also a rape survivor.

Before going to school, Lyne prays in a church. 'They sometimes share food with me at church.' She dreams of working at the State University of Haiti after finishing her classical studies. Asked if there are any citizen initiatives to protect the neighbourhood from gangs, Lyne said she doesn't really know: 'The authorities are absent. The gangs have been in charge since last year. The police have never carried out an operation in the area since this war started.' ■



MAPPING MAJOR GANGS AND ALLIANCES

G9 alliance

The G9 gang, formerly known as G9 Family and Allies, is an alliance of nine powerful gangs in Port-au-Prince: Delmas 6 Gang (led by Jimmy Chérizier); Baz Krache Dife; Baz Pilate; Nan Ti Bwa; Simon Pelé's gang; Baz Nan Chabon; Waf Jérémie; Nan Boston; and the Belekou gang. These gangs exercise power in the capital primarily, and especially in the communes of Delmas, Pétion Ville and part of Carrefour, thanks to alliances with other gangs that control districts of certain communes in the Western department. Through the alliance, G9 holds a strategic position along the coast and uses its reach to disrupt the economy, including fuel stoppages, halting food deliveries and extorting businesses using the ports.

The coalition was formed in 2020 by Chérizier, a former police officer who led the Delmas 6 Gang while in the police. He was alleged to have carried out the La Saline massacre alongside several of the gangs that would later become members of the G9.⁵⁴ Chérizier was fired from the police service after the attack, one of the worst in recent history, in which 71 people were killed.⁵⁵

The G9 was formed at a time when Moïse was facing mass protests over the PetroCaribe scandal. Delmas 6 coordinated attacks with other gangs on neighbourhoods – many of which were opposition strongholds – in order to take over territory from residents and exert their control. Following attacks across the Pont-Rouge, Chancerelles, La Saline and Fort Dimanche neighbourhoods, Chérizier took to YouTube to announce the formation of the G9. The alliance includes former and serving police officers, young ex-Lavalas members, PHTK's political base from working-class neighbourhoods, deportees and former soldiers. Gangs within this coalition have maintained a loose alliance and have sometimes fought one another over turf. In some cases, the G9 leadership has served as a moderating force for its constituent members.

The G9 also calls itself 'Forces Révolutionnaires', promoting itself as a revolutionary movement even during the most recent administration. While G9 was believed to have strong links to PHTK during Moïse's leadership, since his death the group has tried to use its power to remove Moïse's replacement, Prime Minister Henry. Following the death of Moïse, Chérizier held press conferences, led demonstrations and held up fuel distribution in the port district to demand that the prime minister step down.

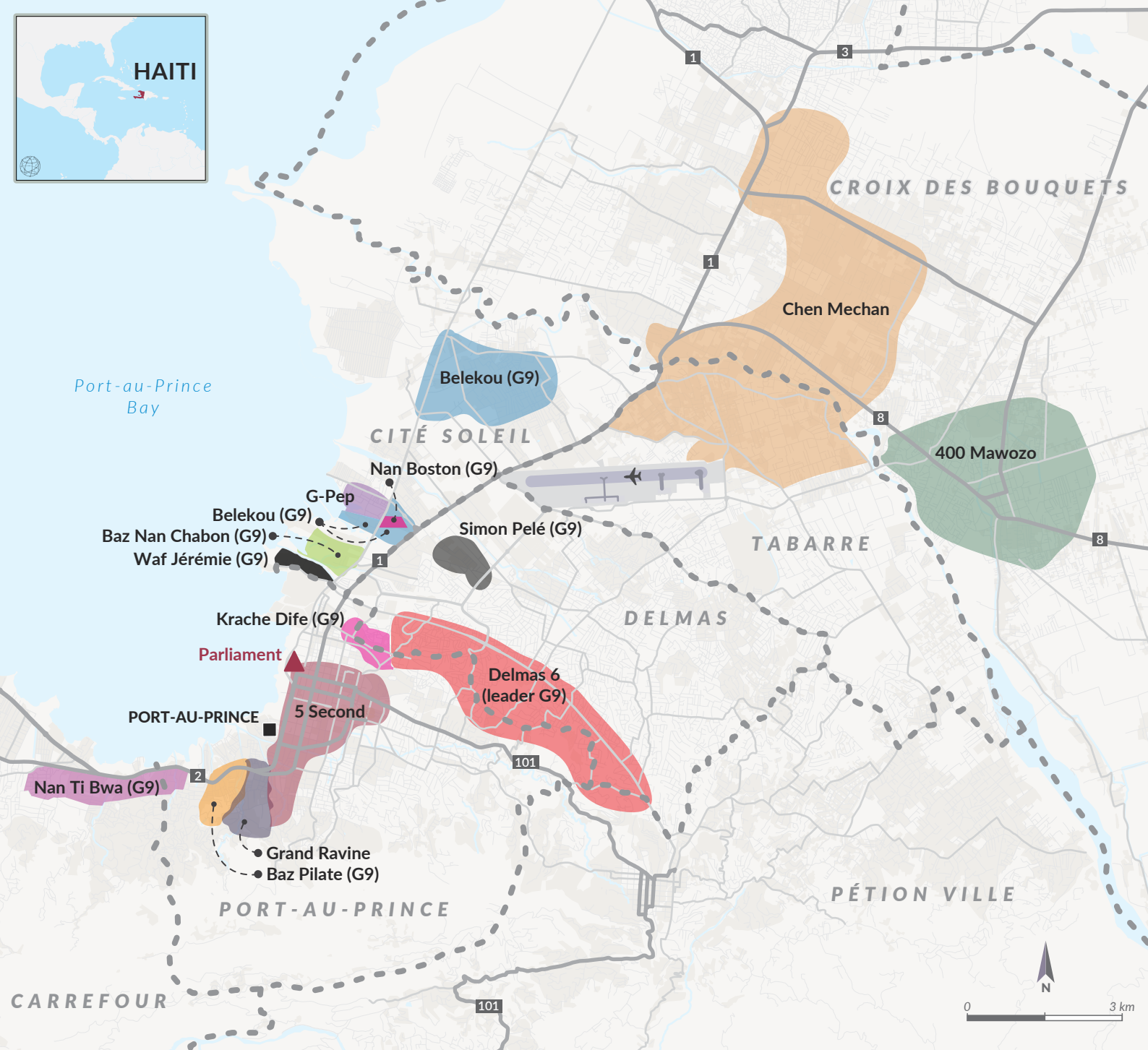


FIGURE 1 Port-au-Prince gang territories.

NOTE: This map is an estimate of gangs' primary locations based on local research and OSINT in October 2022. However, many operate in multiple areas. Territorial control can change quickly as the situation rapidly develops.

The gang presents itself as being on the side of the people and opposed to government corruption, but members of the coalition are known for brutal violence, including rape, arbitrary killings and the dismembering of bodies, as well as looting and burning down shacks and market stalls. It has been reported that the G9 has been building a broader set of alliances with smaller gangs, dubbed the G20, as part of a strategy to spread out from the capital into other parts of the country.

400 Mawozo

The 400 Mawozo gang⁵⁶ is considered to be the largest in Haiti, with a waiting list to join. The gang is principally based in the outskirts of Ganthier commune in the eastern Croix des Bouquets arrondissement and in communes within Port-au-Prince, such as Tabarre and residential areas of

Pétion Ville, such as Vivy Michel, Belvil and Pernier. It has branches in Gros Morne, in the north of Haiti, and in the Dominican Republic.

This gang is made up of deportees, former leaders of popular opposition organizations, former low-level smugglers on the Haitian–Dominican border, as well as police officers. Up to 80 per cent of kidnappings in Haiti from June 2021 to September 2021 have been attributed to the 400 Mawozo.⁵⁷ Their international profile was raised significantly after they kidnapped 17 US missionaries in October 2021. Their leader, imprisoned in Haiti, was extradited to the United States in May 2022 following the abduction.⁵⁸ The group has since aligned itself with the G-Pep coalition (see below), providing it with many more recruits.

G-Pep

G-Pep is a second gang alliance based in the Cité Soleil neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince. It was started by Jean Pierre Gabriel, alias Ti Gabriel, leader of the Nan Brooklyn gang.⁵⁹ The group is understood to be a copycat federation of criminal armed groups that was formed to counter the G9.⁶⁰ G-Pep is believed to be associated with the opposition, while others allege that the group is funded by and aligned with a well-known Haitian businessman.⁶¹ G-Pep has been fighting G9 affiliated gangs in Cité Soleil since 2020. The conflict intensified during 2022 after G9 tried to displace G-Pep from the Brooklyn neighbourhood.⁶²

Grand Ravine and 5 Second

The Grand Ravine and 5 Second gangs are based in the Martissant region of Port-au-Prince. These gangs are made up of young people from the shanty towns of the metropolitan area. The majority are former members of vigilante brigades and popular organizations close to Fanmi Lavalas. From 2014 onwards, with the support of certain parliamentarians close to the government and the opposition, these two gangs amassed a fortune through kidnappings and hijacking goods vehicles. They have made alliances with corrupt police officers and established partnerships with businessmen to provide protection. These two gangs control most of the motorbike-taxi ranks. They also control the southern exit of Port-au-Prince, on which four departments of the country depend.

Baz Pilate

One of the most powerful gangs in Haiti today is commonly known as Baz Pilate. Composed of dismissed and serving police officers, many of its members come from specialized corps such as SWAT (special weapons and tactics) and CIMO. This gang, one of the most important members of the G9 coalition, controls a large part of the territory of Port-au-Prince, in particular the Champs de Mars, the administrative zone of the government, and the neighbourhood of Ti Bois, with an increasing influence in other large cities, particularly in the north.

Gang members specialize in drug trafficking, burglary, racketeering and targeted killings. From 2015, they joined forces with criminal gangs and politicians to control elections. This gang has undergone major changes. It currently controls the administration of Port-au-Prince, has tentacles in the justice system and is becoming a security partner for certain economic groups.

Baz Galil

The Baz Galil gang (not shown on the map, as its territory is outside the city) is composed mainly of deportees from the United States. US policy over the last 15 years has led to the deportation of thousands of individuals to Haiti who, very often, do not have Haitian nationality. These deportees, most of whom are criminals convicted in the US, arrive in Haiti without any follow-up and are easily recruited by politicians and other gangs. In 2013, the deportees created an association with the support of certain influential drug lords in the PHTK party. Some observers have noted that the phenomenon of kidnapping took off with the massive deportation of these Haitians and Haitian-Americans starting in the early 2000s.

The gang specializes in kidnapping and transporting drug shipments. The members of this gang also offer consultancy services and crime planning to other local gangs, such as the 400 Mawozo. The latter also has a strong component of former deportees who support Baz Galil in capturing new territories. The gang has strong connections in drug circles, in the leadership of the PHTK itself and with senior officials at the highest levels of the state.

CONCLUSION

Although gang affiliations, partnerships and territories are fluid and likely to change, the inherent problem of gangs in Haiti is unfortunately not going away. Insecurity continues to grow at an alarming rate in Haiti: it is crossing the borders of Port-au-Prince to spread nationwide. Gangs exert alarming influence over the security of Haitians, the economy and the political situation. The consolidation of power through federations is a trend to follow, as is whether these efforts morph into political ambitions.

Any solution will require reforms of the institutions that make up the criminal chain, to prosecute the economic and political sponsors, and the main leaders of the gangs in order to initiate their real dismantling. It will be necessary to establish a realistic and effective short-, medium- and long term programme of disarmament and social reintegration of the footsoldiers of the gangs, and finally to begin to resolve the structural socio-economic problems that allow the supply of young people who are vulnerable to recruitment by the gangs, based on a new project and model of a sustainable and independent state, and equitable development.



Lawyers take part in a protest lobbying the prime minister to relocate the civil court to a safer part of Port-au-Prince.

© Valerie Baeriswyl/AFP via Getty Images.



NOTES

- 1 Diego Da Rin, New gang battle lines scar Haiti as political deadlock persists, International Crisis Group, 27 July 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/haiti/new-gang-battle-lines-scar-haiti-political-deadlock-persists>.
- 2 See World Bank, Haiti overview, 14 June 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview#1>.
- 3 On 30 September 1991, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown in a military coup that left dozens dead and hundreds injured in Port-au-Prince. The putsch was condemned by the US. Aristide had become the first democratically elected Haitian president on 16 December 1990, winning nearly 76% of the vote. The head of the military junta that took power was General Raoul Cédras, who had been in charge of the committee for the security of the elections in December 1990 and was promoted to commander-in-chief of the armed forces in July 1991.
- 4 Jason Beaubien, Haiti's slain president presided over the collapse of security in his country, NPR, 20 July 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/20/1018275532/haitis-slain-president-presided-over-the-collapse-of-security-in-his-country>.
- 5 Haiti opposition condemns country's slide into rule by decree, Reuters, 15 January 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-politics/haiti-opposition-condemns-countrys-slide-into-rule-by-decree-idUSKBN1ZE098>.
- 6 *Tap-tap*: the Haitian Creole name for brightly painted vehicles that act as shared public taxis.
- 7 Insecurity Insight, Haiti: Situation report: Gangs and the Haitian state, 12 November 2021, p 3, <https://www.insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Haiti-Vigil-Insight-Situation-Report-11-November-2021.pdf>.
- 8 Scott Mistler-Ferguson, G9 vs. G-PEP - The two gang alliances tearing Haiti apart, InSight Crime, 21 July 2022, <https://insightcrime.org/news/g9-gpep-two-gang-alliances-tearing-haiti-apart/>.
- 9 According to research conducted by the GI-TOC.
- 10 The name comes from a Creole myth about an 'uncle' (Tonton) who kidnaps and punishes obstreperous children by snaring them in a sack (*macoute*) and carrying them off to be consumed at breakfast. See <https://www.coha.org/tonton-macoutes/>.
- 11 Athena Kolbe and Robert Muggah, Haiti needs to confront the causes and consequences of violent crime, International Peace Institute Global Observatory, 27 August 2012, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2012/08/haiti-needs-to-confront-the-causes-and-consequences-of-violent-crime/>.
- 12 This does not include criminal networks (more diffuse criminal organizations involved in illicit activity), paramilitary groups or semi-formal armed groups with known criminal activity.
- 13 Editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Military regimes and the Duvaliers, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Haiti/Military-regimes-and-the-Duvaliers>.
- 14 Sabine Carey, Tonton Macoutes Semi-official PGM/ Volunteers for National Security (Haiti), Pro-government militias guidebook, <https://militias-guidebook.com/pgag/362/>.
- 15 William R. Long, Duvalier flees to France; Army-led panel to rule Haiti: U.S. C-141 Takes 'Baby Doc' to exile; Violence follows jubilation in capital, *Los Angeles Times*, 8 February 1986, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-02-08-mn-5513-story.html>.
- 16 Sabine Carey, Tonton Macoutes Semi-official PGM/ Volunteers for National Security (Haiti), Pro-government militias guidebook, <https://militias-guidebook.com/pgag/362/>.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Walter Kemp, Mark Shaw and Arthur Boutellis, Haiti, in *The elephant in the room: How can peace operations deal with organized crime?*, International Peace Institute, June 2013, pp 32–45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09589.7>.
- 19 David Beer, Chapter 3 Haiti: The gangs of Cité Soleil, *Journal of Complex Operations*, 24 May 2016, <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/780129/chapter-3-haiti-the-gangs-of-cit-soleil/>.
- 20 Walter Kemp, Mark Shaw and Arthur Boutellis, Haiti, in *The elephant in the room: How can peace operations deal with organized crime?*, International Peace Institute, June 2013, pp 32–45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09589.7>.

- 21 Jonathan M. Katz, Gang members in Haitian slum profit from disaster, *The San Diego Union Tribune*, 18 January 2010, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-gang-members-in-haitian-slum-profit-from-disaster-2010jan18-story.html>; PBS, Frontline: Battle for Haiti, <https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-battle-for-haiti/>.
- 22 PBS, Frontline: Battle for Haiti, 2011, <https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-battle-for-haiti/>.
- 23 Amnesty International, Haiti: Aftershocks: Women speak out against sexual violence In Haiti's camps, 6 January 2011, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/001/2011/en/>.
- 24 Athena Kolbe and Robert Muggah, Haiti needs to confront the causes and consequences of violent crime, International Peace Institute: Global Observatory, August 2012, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2012/08/haiti-needs-to-confront-the-causes-and-consequences-of-violent-crime/>.
- 25 Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic, Observatoire Haïtien des Crimes Contre l'Humanité, Killing with impunity: State-sanctioned massacres in Haiti, 4, April 2021, 24–29, http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Killing_With_Impunity-1.pdf.
- 26 Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2022 Country Report 2022, https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2022_HTI.pdf.
- 27 Associated Press, *Haiti: Choques entre pandillas dejan docenas de Muertos*, Local10, 13 July 2022, <https://www.local10.com/espanol/2022/07/13/haiti-choques-entre-pandillas-dejan-decenas-de-muertos/>.
- 28 Andre Paultre and Sarah Marsh, Gang boss wades into Haiti turmoil, sees conspiracy behind present's killing, Reuters, 10 July 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/rival-haitian-leaders-battle-power-after-presidents-assassination-2021-07-10/>.
- 29 Chris Dalby, Haiti's neighbors grow concerned at spread of gang governance, InSight Crime, 10 September 2021, <https://insightcrime.org/news/haitis-neighbors-grow-concerned-spread-gang-governance/>.
- 30 Ricardo Arduengo, Haiti crippled by fuel shortages as gang leader demands prime minister resign, CNBC, 27 October 2021, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/27/haiti-crippled-by-fuel-shortages-as-gang-leader-demands-pm-resign.html>.
- 31 Matt Rivers et al, Powerful gang behind kidnapping of 17 US and Canadian missionaries in Haiti, security source says, CNN, 18 October 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/18/americas/haiti-american-missionary-400-mawozo-intl-hnk/index.html>.
- 32 Alessandro Ford, Why Haiti's gang war keeps on getting worse, InSight Crime, 20 May 2022, <https://insightcrime.org/news/why-haiti-gang-war-keeps-on-getting-worse/>.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Haiti: Wave of violence deepens crisis, Human Rights Watch, 22 July 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/22/haiti-wave-violence-deepens-crisis>.
- 35 Ciara Nugent, Why a Venezuelan oil program is fueling massive street protests in Haiti, *Time*, 24 June 2019, <https://time.com/5609054/haiti-protests-petrocaribe/>.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 PetroCaribe scandal: Haiti court accuses officials of mismanaging \$2 bln in aid, France 24, 18 August 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/20200817-petrocaribe-scandal-haiti-court-accuses-officials-of-mismanaging-2-bln-in-aid>.
- 38 G9 and family, InSight Crime, 18 July 2022, <https://insightcrime.org/caribbean-organized-crime-news/g9-family-profile/>.
- 39 Ouest is one of the ten departments of Haiti, containing Port-au-Prince.
- 40 National Human Rights Defense Network, The Judiciary Police investigations related to trafficking in firearms and ammunition: The RNDDH welcomes the efforts of the Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (DCPJ), press release, 26 July 2022, <https://web.rnddh.org/the-judiciary-police-investigations-related-to-trafficking-in-firearms-and-ammunition-the-rnddh-welcomes-the-efforts-of-the-central-directorate-of-the-judicial-police-dcpj/?lang=en>.
- 41 National Network for the Defense of Human Rights, The events in La Saline: from power struggle between armed gangs to State-sanctioned massacre, 1 December 2018; and Killing with impunity: State-sanctioned massacres in Haiti, Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic, 2021, http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Killing_With_Impunity-1.pdf.
- 42 'Pays-lock' is an expression used to describe a form of opposition mobilization in Haiti during which streets are barricaded, and public and private institutions closed. Everyone stays at home for the duration of the lockdown, which can last up to two weeks. This form of protest has its origins in the PetroCaribe scandal and the demonstrations over fuel prices in July 2018.
- 43 Haiti – FLASH 215th: The procession of the PM retreats under heavy fire from the G9 gang, Haiti Libre, 18 October 2022, <https://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-35021-haiti-flash-215th-the-procession-of-the-pm-retreats-under-heavy-fire-from-the-g9-gang-videos.html>.
- 44 Wildlore Merancourt and Amanda Colletta, Haitian prime minister forced to flee city after New Year's Day shootout, Washington Post, 3 January 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/01/03/haiti-violence-gangs-prime-minister/>.
- 45 For instance see, National Human Rights Defense Network, Massacre in Cité Soleil: Chilling stories of women and girls victims of gang rape, News Release, 16 August 2022, <https://web.rnddh.org/?lang=en>.

- 46 Insecurity Insight, Haiti: Situation report: Gangs and the Haitian state, 11 November 2021, <https://www.insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Haiti-Vigil-Insight-Situation-Report-11-November-2021.pdf>.
- 47 Ibid., p 3.
- 48 Associated Press, Dozens dead, injured in Haiti's capital in gang clashes, Yahoo! News, 13 July 2022, <https://news.yahoo.com/dozens-dead-injured-haitis-capital-232943843.html>.
- 49 Santana Salmon, Two Haitian journalists killed by gangs while reporting on violence in the capital, Caribbean National Weekly, 14 September 2022, <https://www.caribbeannationalweekly.com/caribbean-breaking-news-featured/two-haitian-journalists-killed-by-gangs-while-reporting-on-violence-in-the-capital/>.
- 50 'Criminal and barbaric': Two Haitian journalists killed by gang, Al Jazeera, 7 January 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/7/criminal-and-barbaric-two-haitian-journalists-killed-by-gang>.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Haiti sees nearly 800 kidnappings so far this year, NGO says, BBC, 21 October 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-58993730>.
- 53 Insecurity Insight, Haiti: Situation report: Gangs and the Haitian state, 11 November 2021, p 3, <https://www.insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Haiti-Vigil-Insight-Situation-Report-11-November-2021.pdf>.
- 54 Oz Chery, US: Cherizier, two ex-government officials sanctioned for plotting La Saline massacre, The Haitian Times, 11 December 2020, <https://haitiantimes.com/2020/12/11/us-cherizier-two-ex-government-officials-sanctioned-for-plotting-la-saline-massacre/>.
- 55 Ingrid Arnesen and Anthony Faiola, In Haiti, coronavirus and a man named Barbecue test the rule of law, *The Washington Post*, 14 August 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/haiti-moise-coronavirus-barbecue/2020/08/14/2554fce4-cf4d-11ea-8c55-61e7fa5e82ab_story.html.
- 56 'Mawozo' is a Creole expression referring to an individual devoid of all good manners, e.g. a 'simpleton' or 'inexperienced man'.
- 57 Miriam Berger, Who is 400 Mawozo, the Haitian gang accused of kidnapping American missionaries?, *Washington Post*, 16 December 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/10/17/haiti-kidnapping-400-mawozo-christian-aid/>.
- 58 Gessika Thomas and Brian Ellsworth, Leader of Haiti's 400 Mawozo gang extradited to US, Reuters, 3 May 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/leader-haitis-400-mawozo-gang-extradited-us-2022-05-03/>.
- 59 Dozens dead and hurt in Haiti's capital in gang clashes, *Bury Times*, 13 July 2022, <https://www.burytimes.co.uk/news/20275098.dozens-dead-hurt-haitis-capital-gang-clashes/>.
- 60 Kim Ives, In Cité Soleil, the G9 Federation in all-out war with G-Pèp', Haiti Liberté, 13 July 2022, <https://haitiliberte.com/in-cite-soleil-the-g9-federation-in-all-out-war-with-g-pep/>.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Scott Mistler-Ferguson, G9 vs. G-PEP - The two gang alliances tearing Haiti apart, InSight Crime, 21 July 2022, <https://insightcrime.org/news/g9-gpep-two-gang-alliances-tearing-haiti-apart/>.



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with over 600 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.

www.globalinitiative.net