

Summary

More than 1400 people have died in 2023 due to gang-related violence. Armed clashes and kidnappings are rampant in Port-au-Prince. The authorities seem unable to cope with the situation. Almost half of the country's population suffers from acute food insecurity. The government and the UN have called for an intervention, which, at the moment, seems unlikely. Almost 2 years since the assassination of Prime Minister Jovenel Moise, there is still no viable roadmap towards elections. Gang-violence, looting, and anti-government riots are highly likely.

Recent events and developments

The security situation is deteriorating in Haiti, amid a protracted political and humanitarian crisis. On April 25, 2023, a crowd of people lynched 14 gang members in Port-au-Prince. This comes after a raid by armed groups on April 19 left 100 people dead in the village of Source Matelas, outside the capital. Earlier on, between April 14 and 19, clashes between rival gangs resulted in 70 killed in the Cité Soleil neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. Gangs now control 80% of the capital and are expanding their activities in the Departments of Ouest and Artibonite. Since the beginning of 2023, approximately 400 people have been kidnapped, including 29 foreign nationals. To illustrate, on April 17, the Honorary Consul of St Kitts and Nevis was abducted after his convoy was attacked in the Delmas neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. This comes after a driver of the Cuban medical assistance mission was kidnapped in the capital on January 23. The situation has prompted both interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry and the UN to call for an international intervention to restore order. However, such a mission is widely opposed by Haitian society, and other nations have seemed reluctant to send troops in the country.

Impact assessment

Only in April 2023, 600 casualties were recorded in Haiti. Events on the ground show that local security forces are unable to curtail the threat of the gangs. In this context, criminal groups are likely to expand their activities over more territory in the following months. Without an external intervention, clashes between rival gangs, attacks on civilians, and kidnappings are expected to intensify. As the lynching of gang members shows, segments of the population are willing to use extrajudicial violence in order to protect their communities. This will likely exacerbate the violence, as reprisal attacks on neighbourhoods and clashes between gangs and civilian militias will become highly likely. The UN estimates that 5 million people currently suffer from acute food insecurity. This makes the looting of humanitarian aid by armed actors possible in the future. The dire situation, and the lack of a transitional plan that leads to elections, make social turmoil likely. Anti-government riots, such as those that broke out in Port-au-Prince on January 26, 2023, are possible. All of these instances pose critical safety risks for people on the ground.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure emergency plans are updated and appropriately distributed to employees on the ground. Kidnapping scenarios should be considered. Workers travelling to Haiti should undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Advise staff to avoid all non-essential travel within Haiti. If travel is necessary, advise staff to plan their journey ahead, check the state of the roads, and consider travelling with security detail in convoy.
- Advise staff to avoid protests and demonstrations of any kind.
- Continuously monitor local news and liaise with local partners to stay up to date with developments in the region of operations.

Customized advice

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