

Summary

On February 5, in Haiti, violent protests, following January rallies, erupted as citizens demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry who was supposed to organize new elections on February 7. Several opposition parties organized the rallies, which were joined by environmental agency personnel, National Agency for Protected Areas (BSAP). Thousands of people are protesting in the Capital, Port-au-Prince as well as in other cities, affecting infrastructure, blocking roads, and clashing with the police.

Recent events and developments

The unstable security situation in Haiti was highlighted by President Moïse's assassination in 2021. Anti-government rallies began in January with Guy Philippe, an ex-convict who led the protests under the promise of a revolution. Current Prime Minister Henry was meant to organize elections and hand over control to newly elected leaders on February 7, 2024. However, Henry stayed in power. As a result, more protests organized by several opposition parties erupted on February 5, with banks, schools, and government organizations closing in Haiti's northern and southern provinces, while demonstrators barricaded important roads with slashing tires and paralyzed public transit. Clashes were reported in the capital Port-Au-Prince, with officers using tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse demonstrators. Common protest sites in Port-au-Prince included the Delmas Route, Canape Vert, Nazon, and Musseau. Local media reported on February 6 that a police station in the northeastern province of Ouanaminthe was attacked. Five agents from the National Agency for Protected Areas (BSAP), were killed on February 7 in the Laboule community of Port-au-Prince, after refusing to surrender their guns. The organization Together to Save Haiti (Tèt ansanm pou sove Ayiti) has called for further protests on February 17.

Impact assessment

The anti-government protests are a direct consequence of indiscriminate killings, rampant sexual violence, looting, kidnappings for ransom, and worsening living conditions. Due to gang violence, the majority of people do not have access to food and depend on humanitarian aid. As the living conditions in Haiti did not ameliorate with the current Prime Minister, gang violence grew intensely along with people's dissatisfaction with the government, which has been fueling the violence in protests. Moreover, although protests began in January with Guy Philippe, they grew more violent in February and are not likely to cease happening in the near future. Clashes, as well as violence involving security personnel, protestors, and gangs, are anticipated; moreover, assaults on police officers and political figures cannot be excluded, as the last President was assassinated. Furthermore, foreign embassies can also be a target for looting and kidnappings of civilians can occur. Longer periods of civil unrest may result in shortages of food, water, and gasoline. Humanitarian organizations in Haiti can be targets of violence as they face the danger of getting caught up in crossfire. Doctors Without Borders suspended their activities in Turgeau district after armed men stopped an ambulance and killed a patient in December 2023.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure emergency and contingency plans are updated and appropriately distributed to employees on the ground. Kidnapping scenarios should be considered.
- Traveling staff should undergo a 3-day HEAT training.
- Ensure staff on the ground does not travel alone. Schedule regular and frequent constant communication on necessary journeys.
- Encourage staff to keep a low profile and minimize exposure by avoiding routines, reduce staff's visibility and ensure site protection measures.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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