

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
Haiti: Options for Improving Human Rights and Security
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Thank you for your introductory remarks, Representative McGovern.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to today's Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission briefing on the human rights and security situation in Haiti. My name is Karla Rios, and I am a Latin American Affairs Analyst at the Congressional Research Service, focusing on a variety of countries in the region, including Haiti.

It is my honor and privilege to moderate today's discussion titled, "**Haiti: Options for Improving Human Rights and Security.**" We are privileged to have with us three distinguished human rights experts on Haiti. Together, we will explore the evolving human rights and security conditions in Haiti following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, as well as the interconnected political and humanitarian challenges in the country.

Haiti's already dire security and humanitarian crisis has escalated further over the past year, since a siege of the capital Port-au-Prince by criminal gangs inflicted devastating violence on the country. In 2024, at least 5,600 people were killed by gang violence according to UN estimates and there are now more than one million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country—the highest number of IDPs due to criminal violence in the world.¹

The gangs amassed control over territory and illicit markets amid the deeply unpopular government of former Prime Minister Ariel Henry (2021-2024), who assumed office following President Moïse's assassination. Henry resigned in April of last year after the formation of a Transitional Presidential Council (TPC). In the face of this crisis, both the TPC- and UN-backed solutions to the multifaceted crisis in Haiti have not met expectations. The TPC has been plagued by infighting and accusations of corruption that have eroded trust among Haitians and international partners.

In terms of Haiti's security situation, in October 2022, then-Prime Minister Henry requested the deployment of an international force to help the outmanned and outgunned Haitian National Police (HNP) quell insecurity and facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid. One year later, in

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Haiti" Over 5,600 Killed in Gang Violence in 2024, UN Figures Show," January 7, 2025; International Organization for Migration, "Haiti Displacement Triples Surpassing One Million as Humanitarian Crisis Worsens," January 14, 2025; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Haiti: Soaring Number of Displaced Desperately Need Protection and Aid Priority, UN Experts Urged," June 20, 2024.

October 2023, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution authorizing a non-UN-multinational force. The Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS), which deployed to Haiti in June 2024, has tried to bolster the HNP in improving security. The MSS has about 1,000 personnel, and remains underfunded and understaffed, unable to meaningfully constrain gangs—which as of March 2025, reportedly controlled an estimated 85% of the Haitian capital and had spread into rural, formerly peaceful zones like Mirebalais.²

In an October 2024 letter to the Secretary-General, Haiti requested that the MSS be transformed into a UN peacekeeping mission “as soon as possible.”³ The Secretary-General noted in a February 2025 letter that transforming the MSS into a peacekeeping operation is “not assessed as a feasible option.”⁴

Finally, elections have not been held in Haiti since 2016. Haiti reportedly plans to hold general elections in November.⁵

Today, our three panelists representing human rights and civil society groups focused on Haiti will discuss key actions that Haitians can lead to improve human rights, security, and democratic participation in the country, and they will examine potential ways that international efforts and the U.S. Congress can strengthen and support these efforts.

Each panelist will present their remarks for five minutes, and we hope to have some time for questions at the end. Before we begin, I would like to briefly introduce our distinguished panelists and share their backgrounds.

The biographies were provided by the panelists.



Vélina Élysée Charlier is a feminist and a political activist. She is member of Nou Pap Dòmi - a Haitian CSO that advocates for social justice, anticorruption, anti-impunity, and accountable governance. NPD is among the organizations that launched the Petrocaribe challenge anti-corruption movement, which rallied hundreds of thousands of Haitians to call for accountability for Haiti's largest corruption scandal. A defender of human rights, through her political involvement, she wants to encourage Haitians, especially young people, to get involved to do

² Security Council Report, “April 2025 Monthly Forecast, Haiti,” March 31, 2025; Juhakenson Blaise and Edxon Francisque, Residents Fleeing Gang Violence in Haiti’s Mirebalais Lament Uncertain Future,” *The Haitian Times*, April 11, 2025.

³ United Nations Security Council, Letter dated 22 October 2024 to the Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, October 25, 2024, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4065052?v=pdf>.

⁴ United Nations Security Council, Letter dated 24 February 2025 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, February 27, 2025, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4078340?ln=en&v=pdf>.

⁵ Sarah Morland, “Haiti Leader Says Long-awaited General Elections Penned for November,” *Associated Press*, January 29, 2025.

politics differently. Alongside NPD, she recently launched the project Sitwayen Pa Dòmi promoting Youth Participation through Civic Education and Engagement in Haiti.



Corinne Paul is the Senior Policy Advisor for Civil and Political Rights at American Jewish World Service, where she works in partnership with grassroots organizations around the world on issues related to human rights. Prior to joining AJWS, she worked to advance foreign policy priorities in the U.S. Senate and for a large international NGO. Corinne has also worked at a nonprofit organization within Haiti. She currently serves as Board President of Write to Be, an organization that supports women and girls in Les Cayes, Haiti.



Isabelle Clérié is a Haitian anthropologist and transitional justice expert whose work is focused on claiming local narratives by leveraging the power and assets of communities in Haiti. From 2017 to 2019, she worked with the UN's Office of the High Commission for Human Rights to lead an entirely civil society led process to design Haiti's first national strategy for confronting past crimes and impunity. In 2024, she designed a context appropriate, multi-stakeholder national dialogue process and continuously engages with actors across all of Haiti's civil society. Isabelle is a board member and advisor to several nonprofits, and writes a column entitled Repairing Development for Proximate Press.