



**GLOBAL
INITIATIVE**
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME

HAITI

Evolution of gangs, armed
groups and political violence

October 2022

Political event	Regime/date	Gangs, non-state armed groups, political violence
1957–1971: DR FRANÇOIS 'PAPA DOC' DUVALIER		
First failed coup attempt to overthrow Duvalier, ¹ led by military officers and foreigners.	1958	
	1959	Duvalier creates paramilitary force known as the Tonton Macoute to serve as a counterweight to the army. ² The 'Macoute' becomes main domestic security force. ³ Macoutes are known to carry out massacres, assassinations and political violence on behalf of the regime over decades.
1971–1986: JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER		
Duvalier appoints his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, as president before he dies. ⁴	1971	Jean-Claude Duvalier renames Tonton Macoute as the Volunteers for National Security (MVSN). ⁵
After two months of violent demonstrations against his 14 years of heavy-handed rule, Jean-Claude Duvalier flees to France. ⁶	1986	
1986–1988: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT		
Military regime: An army-led interim government, the National Council of Government (CNG), is established, led by General Henri Namphy. Legislative Chamber and Duvalier's armed forces, MVSN, are dissolved. ⁷	1986	MVSN officially disbanded by government. Never disarmed, they continue to operate for many years on informal basis. ⁸ People celebrating end of Duvalier regime killed by army in multiple instances, including nearly 100 people in Léogane (south-west of Port-au-Prince) and Fort-Dimanche massacre. February: People take to the streets of Port-au-Prince, attacking the Macoute militias, stoning and burning alive their targets, and destroying the symbols of the regime. Most victims are low-level leaders and religious leaders affiliated with the Macoute.
1986–1988 Civil unrest: Street protests, labour movement strikes against CNG, popular uprisings in regions (Gonaïves). ⁹ Voters approve a new constitution banning dual citizenship and restricting Haitian Americans from running for president in Haiti. The constitution is ratified in March 1987, but only fully reinstated in October 1994. ¹⁰	1987	Late 1980s to early 1990s: The Macoute re-emerge as a pro-government armed group working with various administrations. ¹¹ Political violence continues. In 1987, army kills 22 striking dockworkers in the port of Port-au-Prince and at least 139 peasants in Jean-Rabel (North-West department) by paramilitaries acting on behalf of local landowner.
Namphy declares martial law. Attacks on political leaders, church workers and peasant organizers intensify. ¹²	1988	September: Massacre of Saint-Jean Bosco – armed men, likely former Macoutes, kill at least 13 people (and injure 80) in the church of Saint-Jean Bosco, Port-au-Prince. The church was the parish of the priest and future president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, an opponent of Duvalierism and the military regimes.
1988–1990: PROSPER AVRIL		
General Prosper Avril, former head of the Duvaliers' presidential guard, overthrows General Namphy in a coup. ¹³	SEPTEMBER 1988	
Avril resigns amid protests. Hérard Abraham remains in power for three days, surrenders voluntarily to establish a new provisional government and prepare for elections. ¹⁴	MARCH 1990	12 March: The Massacre of Piatre – in the villages of Piatre, Déjean, Dupervil, Ka Jan and Ti Plas, soldiers and armed civilians from Saint-Marc kill 11 peasants in a land dispute between peasants and landowners.
FEBRUARY 1991–SEPT 1991: JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE		
Jean-Bertrand Aristide becomes the first president not-aligned to Duvalier. René Préval becomes his prime minister.	1991	September: SSP militia emerges when Aristide allegedly allows General Cédras to form a private militia, which then deposes Aristide in a coup. Aristide flees the country. SSP said to dissolve after coup. ¹⁵

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SEPTEMBER 1991–1994: RAOUL CÉDRAS		
	1991	<p>Following the coup, several paramilitary groups form to support the military regime of Cédras. Former Macoutes reassemble as 'attachés', or vigilantes connected to government security forces, such as Capois La Mort. This includes small paramilitary groups formed by former Macoutes.¹⁶</p> <p>Two to three weeks of attacks by soldiers, former Macoutes and various armed groups on members of the democratic movement, including supporters of President Aristide, Lavalas leaders and civil society organizations.</p>
September: UN Security Council establishes the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). ¹⁷	1993	FRAPH (Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti), a far-right paramilitary group, emerges to prop up Cédras regime and counteract support for deposed President Aristide. It includes former Macoutes. ¹⁸
	1993–1994	Multiple massacres carried out by the FRAPH, military and paramilitary groups, including the Carrefour Vincent Massacre and Raboteau Massacre.
1994–1996: JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE		
<p>Aristide returns to power with help from multinational forces.</p> <p>Haiti's National Assembly creates new civilian law enforcement, with the Haitian National Police and the Haitian Coast Guard, with the help of US and UN.¹⁹</p>	1994–1995	<p>Aristide outlaws paramilitary groups and disbands the military.</p> <p>The decommissioning of Haitian Armed Forces (FAd'H) leadership in 1994 sees the military evolve into an illicit power structure, with support in the northern and central provinces.</p> <p>Government's lack of action on issues of military pensions and retraining for unemployed soldiers cause more to join armed groups.²⁰</p>
1996–2001: RENÉ PRÉVAL		
<p>Préval is elected president and begins to implement structural reforms and privatization.</p> <p>He rules by decree, dismisses legislators, and local elected officials are converted into state employees in 1999.²¹</p> <p>Neoliberal reforms are the basic policy disagreement between Préval supporters and Fanmi Lavalas (Aristide's party) but support for Aristide (or lack of) dominates the debate.</p>	1996	
May: Parliamentary, provincial and municipal elections take place supervised by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP). There are no substantive boycotts and voter turnout is more than 60%. Fanmi Lavalas dominates the results with a new right-wing, Protestant Party being the only other group to record significant national support.	2000	Early 2000s: Aristide forms his own armed gangs known as the Chimères (operating in concert with the police and as protection rackets). ²² The pro-Aristide group is mainly used as an instrument of political opposition ²³ in exchange for power and patronage. ²⁴
2001–2004: JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE		
Aristide is sworn in again as president. ²⁵	2001	New moves by government to disarm militias and crack down on ex-soldiers begin.
	2003–2004	<p>Armed group National Revolutionary Front for the Liberation and Reconstruction of Haiti forms as an alliance between two elements opposed to Aristide: armed anti-government gangs and former soldiers of the disbanded Haitian army.²⁶</p> <p>February 2004: The Cannibal Army, aka Artibonite Resistance Front, seizes control of Gonaïves from government. This triggers the 2004 coup, which leads to Aristide's departure.</p>

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Aristide flees to the Central African Republic, claiming to the media he was kidnapped. His supporters denounce a coup.	FEBRUARY 2004	Following Aristide's departure, the Chimères continue to operate in the Port-au-Prince basin carrying out kidnapping, assassinations and terror operations, notably Operation Baghdad.
2004–2006: BONIFACE ALEXANDRE		
With no reference to the Haitian constitution, a 'council of the wise' is set up to select a new prime minister. Gérard Latortue is appointed.	MARCH 2004	Paramilitaries retake control of the former Haitian army headquarters. ²⁷ Aristide's supporters, and activists and officials are hunted down. One of the most prominent, Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, is unable to leave his office as his home is burned and looted. ²⁸
	2005	The police deploy civilian vigilantes to carry out slum raids targeted the gangs supporting Aristide. ²⁹ Public support for the ex-military gangs fades as they fight the police, backed by the UN stabilization mission. ³⁰ UN peacekeeping mission increasingly confronts ex-soldiers, and pro- and anti-Aristide street gangs. ³¹
2006–2011: RENÉ PRÉVAL		
Provisional Electoral Council bans 15 political parties from participating, including Famni Lavalas (Aristide's party). January: Earthquake hits Haiti with devastating impact. Police concede they cannot address security in camps and encourage citizens in slums to deal with criminals themselves. Groups form nightwatches and armed defence units. ³⁵ August: At least 20 candidates register to run for president in elections the government and UN remain committed to on 28 November.	2010	During the second presidency of Préval, crime levels fall following his efforts to depoliticize and clean up the National Police. ³² The earthquake leads to thousands of prisoners escaping from the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince. ³³ Many escaped gang leaders return to their original neighbourhoods; others take over makeshift camps designed for earthquake victims. A new armed group, the Armée Fédérale, brings together escaped prisoners. The escapees use the camps as safe havens, and the police hesitate to enter in pursuit of criminals for fear of civilian casualties. ³⁴ From 2010, older neighbourhood self-defence groups, the <i>bazes</i> , are overtaken by younger, less ideologically driven gangs after the earthquake; these new gangs are more disposed to challenge competing gangs. ³⁶
	2011	Gender-based violence spreads in the camps. ³⁷ Rape, violence and child prostitution increase in the absence of security patrols and gang recruitment among unemployed youth. ³⁸
2011–2016: MICHEL JOSEPH MARTELLY		
Martelly wins 68% of the votes, in a very low turnout. Martelly founds Haitian Tèt Kale Party (PHTK).	MARCH 2011	Ex-military gangs occupy former military posts and buildings before their formal reinstatement, asserting authority over the government. ³⁹
Martelly announces a plan to reinstate the nation's military.	AUGUST 2011	
Elections take place with violence erupting, causing police to close a number of polling stations. ⁴⁰	AUGUST 2015	
Presidential elections held and Jovenel Moïse of the PHTK (Martelly's choice) receives 32.8% in first round.	OCTOBER 2015	
	2016	400 Mawozo gang is created in the Croix des Bouquets neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince. It has been expanding significantly since 2018. ⁴¹
November: Moïse is elected president with 55.7% of the vote. ⁴²		

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2017–2021: JOVENEL MOÏSE		
<p>Moïse assumes presidency in February, announces reinstatement of the Haitian Armed Forces.⁴³</p> <p>PetroCaribe scandal: Special Haitian Senate Commission issues report on the management of a US\$2 billion loan via Venezuela's PetroCaribe oil programme, accusing former prime ministers and Moïse's chief of staff of corruption and poor management.⁴⁴</p> <p>Opposition protests organized.⁴⁵</p> <p>MINUSTAH leaves Haiti.⁴⁶</p>	2017	Grand Ravine massacre: In November, 200 Haitian police raid the Grand Ravine area, in an anti-gang operation that ends up with the summary execution of innocent civilians on a school campus. ⁴⁷
Popular protests are triggered over the PetroCaribe scandal and continue through to 2020.	2018	Members of Moïse's government allegedly assist in massacres by providing gangs with money, weapons, police uniforms and government vehicles used in attacks in Port-au-Prince, including La Saline. ⁴⁸
UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) established. ⁴⁹	2019	
	2020	<p>G9 and Family (G9 An Fanmi) forms as a criminal federation of nine of the most powerful gangs in Port-au-Prince.</p> <p>The G-Pep emerges as an alliance of gangs in Cité Soleil, allied with other armed groups around the capital, in opposition to G9.⁵⁰</p>
<p>Moïse assassinated by a team of foreign mercenaries. Murder remains unsolved.</p> <p>Claude Joseph, interim prime minister, declares himself in charge and imposes 15 days of martial law.</p>	<p>APRIL–MAY 2021</p> <p>JULY 2021</p>	<p>Clashes between rival gangs erupt in the urban areas of Martissant, Fontamara and Delmas, leading to hundreds of houses being burned down or damaged, causing a wave of evacuees.⁵¹</p> <p>Jimmy Chérizier holds a press conference and pushes for protests against the assassination, accusing opposition leaders and the police of being behind the killing.⁵²</p>
2021–PRESENT: ARIEL HENRY		
<p>Ariel Henry leads country as prime minister, with support from foreign powers.</p> <p>The Montana Accord, a civil society coalition, chooses Fritz Jean as interim president during a unitary summit,⁵³ which Ariel Henry rejects.</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER 2021</p> <p>OCTOBER 2021</p>	<p>Gangs act as de facto authorities in parts of the country, including parts of the capital, controlling access to hospitals and markets, enforcing tight curfews and driving thousands from their homes.⁵⁴</p> <p>A gang truce is brokered to allow aid convoys to leave Port-au-Prince and reach August 2021 earthquake-hit areas.</p> <p>G9 holds up fuel trucks at port, leading to fuel shortage in country, demanding Henry's resignation.⁵⁵</p> <p>400 Mawozo abduct 17 US missionaries,⁵⁶ prompting US to target the gang's US arms suppliers and extradite its leader.</p>
	2022	<p>The criminal federalization of Port-au-Prince's gangs means that most gangs in the capital now belong to either the G9 or G-Pep alliances;⁵⁷ 400 Mawozo joins G-Pep.⁵⁸</p> <p>January: When Henry visits Gonaïves, gangs attack his convoy.</p>

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<p>Montana Accord calls for a provisional government to bolster security and ensure free elections in two years. Henry will remain in office, despite calls for him to step down by the Montana Group, leading to further instability in Haiti, including sporadic economic protests.⁵⁹</p>	FEBRUARY	
	APRIL–MAY	<p>Escalating gang violence as groups fight to control more territory amid the power vacuum.⁶⁰</p> <p>Fighting between late April and early May leaves at least 188 dead and displaces over 16 000 in Port-au-Prince.⁶¹</p>
	JULY	<p>Fifty die in clashes between G-Pep and G9 in Cité Soleil district of Port-au-Prince (a day after the first anniversary of the assassination of President Moïse).⁶²</p>

NOTES

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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.

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