

IMUN 2024 Research Report

Security Council Issue #2: The Situation in Haiti

Introduction:

The situation in Haiti has become an urgent matter of concern for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) due to the ongoing political instability, socio-economic challenges, and escalating humanitarian crises. Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere (CIA, 2021), has faced prolonged struggles with governance, natural disasters, and widespread poverty. Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, the country's political vacuum has worsened, leading to increased gang violence, lawlessness, and the collapse of basic public services. This research report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing Haiti and outline key areas of focus for the Security Council debate, to find sustainable solutions to tackle poverty, stabilise Haiti's political landscape and restore peace and security

Background Information:

Haiti's challenges are deeply intertwined with its complex history, socio-political dynamics, and frequent natural disasters. After gaining independence in 1804 (University of Kentucky, n.d.), Haiti has faced decades of political instability, foreign intervention, dictatorship, and corruption, all of which have hindered its development. Political instability has been a recurring issue throughout Haiti's history, marked by numerous coups and power transitions. The assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 exacerbated the country's political crisis, leaving no definitive power to rule. Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who took office following the assassination, has struggled to assert his authority, and repeated delays in national elections have deepened the political uncertainty.

In the wake of Moïse's death, powerful armed gangs have taken advantage of the political vacuum, seizing control of large parts of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other regions. This surge in gang violence has resulted in widespread insecurity, including kidnappings, extortion, and killings. By 2023, it was estimated that up to 90% of Port-au-Prince was under gang control (Partners in Health, 2023) and that the level of insecurity in the city was comparable to countries in armed conflict. (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2024); severely limiting access to essential services and displacing tens of thousands. Haiti's already fragile economy has also deteriorated. In 2023, Over 6 in 10 people live below the poverty line (IFAD, 2021), partially exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, global inflation, and other trade disruptions. Many Haitians face food and fuel shortages, contributing to widespread hunger, malnutrition, and declining public health.

These factors have converged to create a severe humanitarian crisis. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that nearly half of Haiti's population requires humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2024), with millions suffering from acute food insecurity. Public health services have collapsed, with limited access to clean water, sanitation, and medical care. Cholera, which had been largely eradicated, re-emerged in 2022 (Rubin et al., 2022), further compounding the health crisis. In addition to these socio-political and economic challenges, Haiti is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, including hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods. A 7.2 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti in August 2021 further straining the country's resources.

International intervention in Haiti has been ongoing for decades, with mixed results. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH, 2017), which operated from 2004 to 2017, left a

controversial legacy due to allegations of abuse and its role in introducing a cholera epidemic. The Security Council is now considering new forms of international assistance, possibly including another peacekeeping or stabilization mission aimed at restoring order and supporting Haitian-led solutions.

Focus of Debate:

The UNSC debate on Haiti should focus on several key areas to address the country's complex crises. First, restoring political stability is crucial. The UNSC must explore how to support the creation of a legitimate, inclusive transitional government capable of organizing free and fair elections. Facilitating dialogue among Haiti's political elites and civil society will be essential for restoring constitutional order and governance. When addressing this issue, the implications of the ongoing control of criminal gangs in major cities and the general population should also be considered.

Addressing gang violence and improving security is another priority. The Security Council could consider authorizing international security assistance to help the Haitian National Police regain control of gang-controlled areas, while also ensuring human rights are upheld. Long-term strategies to reduce gang influence, such as addressing economic inequality, unemployment, and social exclusion, should also be part of the debate.

The humanitarian crisis and economic recovery are two other central concerns. Immediate actions are needed to prevent a worsening humanitarian disaster, particularly in food security, healthcare, and displacement. Long-term economic recovery programs should aim to reduce Haiti's dependence on aid by promoting sustainable development and the restoration of economic and social infrastructure.

The role of international and regional actors is also vital. The UNSC should clarify how regional organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) can contribute to resolving Haiti's crises. Coordinating with major international stakeholders, including non-state organizations, is imperative for a unified response. Lastly, human rights and accountability must be emphasized, with a focus on investigating rights violations and strengthening Haiti's judicial institutions to combat impunity and uphold justice. This can be accomplished by collaborating with nongovernmental humanitarian organizations however efforts should be made to ensure Haiti has domestic institutions in place to avoid dependency on international stakeholders.

Recommendations for Research:

Delegates should focus their research on several key areas to be better informed about the situation in Haiti. First, a thorough understanding of political developments is crucial, including the history of Haiti's political instability and the power struggles following the assassination of President Moïse. Delegates should explore the key political factions and actors involved, as well as the role of civil society in efforts to restore stability.

Research into gang violence and organized crime is equally important. Delegates should investigate the origins and growth of gangs in Haiti, their sources of funding, and connections to political actors. Examining successful international interventions against gang violence in other regions could provide useful strategies that might be adapted for Haiti's situation.

In terms of humanitarian support, delegates should study reports from UN agencies such as OCHA and the World Food Programme (WFP) to understand the severity of the humanitarian crisis and identify key areas which require immediate intervention. Additionally, delegates should assess the effectiveness of the current aid program (OCHA, 2024) and propose ways to improve upon it.

Understanding international involvement is another essential research area. Delegates should review past interventions, such as the UN's MINUSTAH in 2004, and draw lessons from their successes and challenges. They should also examine the positions and actions of key international and regional actors, along with past and proposed UNSC resolutions.

Finally, research into human rights is critical. Delegates should investigate human rights abuses committed by gangs, state security forces, and international peacekeepers, and explore potential mechanisms for accountability, such as international tribunals or truth and reconciliation commissions. This will be vital for addressing impunity and ensuring justice.

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