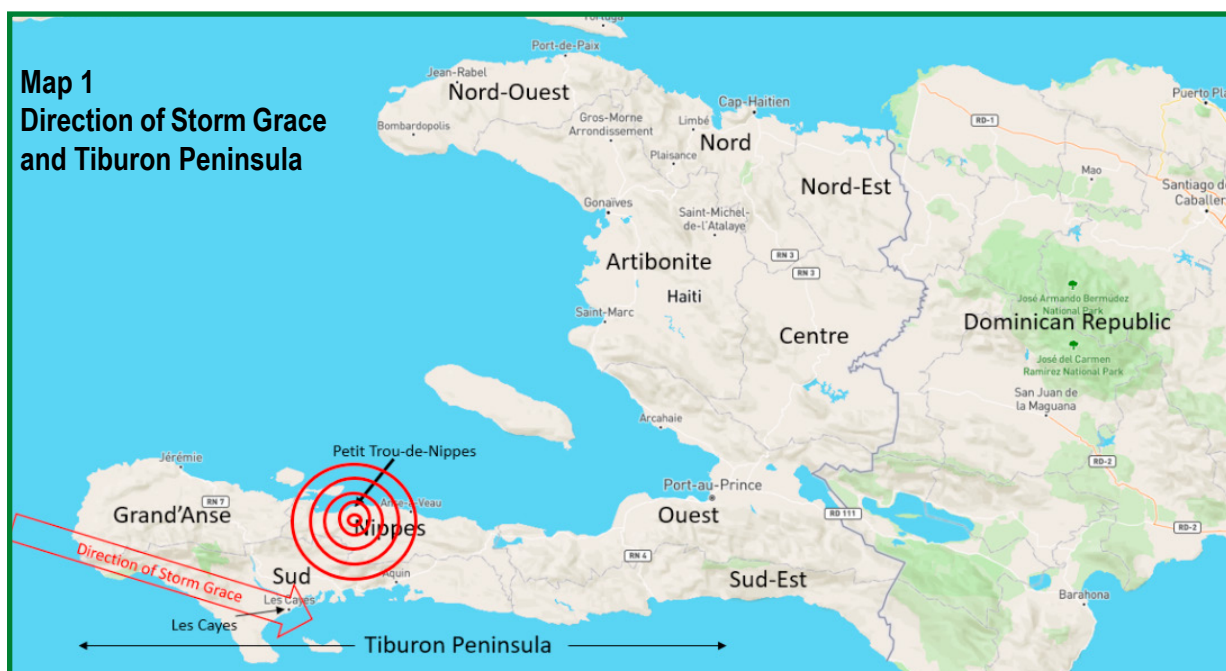


Haiti: Situation Report

This document provides an analysis of the current situation and the implications for aid agencies.
30 September 2021

The current poor security situation and political fragility will continue to exacerbate humanitarian needs, especially food aid, for many months.



SUMMARY

- The security environment in Haiti has deteriorated further since President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated on 07 July of this year. The death of the increasingly autocratic Moïse has left a power vacuum; there is no sitting Parliament as he had ruled by decree since January 2020.
- A magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck the Tiburon Peninsula near Petit-Trou-de-Nippes, approximately 150kms west of Port-au-Prince, on 14 August.
- This was immediately followed by Tropical Storm Grace which struck the area on 16-17 August triggering flash floods.
- Ariel Henry signed a cross-party deal on 11 September to lead an interim administration until fresh elections at the end of 2022.
- International differences over Haiti's governance (the UN initially supported Claude Joseph as interim President until elections are held, while the US-led Core Group recognised Ariel Henry as interim Prime Minister) mean that there is **UNLIKELY** to be strong or coherent leadership for many months, despite Henry now having the support of the wider international community.
- The UN also has a mixed history in Haiti, which it has admitted. Aid organisations have also been linked to abuses. There is, therefore, **UNLIKELY** to be much appetite for another UN peacekeeping mission.
- The poor security situation means that there is virtually no prospect of this situation changing now. Indeed, it will **HIGHLY LIKELY** be compounded by more widespread looting of assistance along major roads by communities frustrated with lack of support for them.

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OVERVIEW

The security environment in Haiti has deteriorated further since President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated at his home in the Pelerin 5 district (see [Map 2](#)) of the capital, Port-au-Prince, on 07 July of this year. The death of the increasingly autocratic Moïse has left a power vacuum; there is no sitting Parliament as he had ruled by decree since January 2020. Compounding this, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck the Tiburon Peninsula near Petit-Trou-de-Nippes, approximately 150kms west of Port-au-Prince, on 14 August. This was immediately followed by Tropical Storm Grace which struck the area on 16-17 August triggering flash floods that complicated rescue and humanitarian response efforts. Furthermore, there have since been more than 900 aftershocks, including around 400 stronger than magnitude 3 on the Richter scale. The government said on 07 September that at least 2,248 people had been killed and more than 12,000 injured. OCHA Haiti, meanwhile, estimates that at least 136,800 buildings were damaged or destroyed with 650,000 people, including 260,000 children, in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.

Political: Moïse's assassination and current political situation

Local police say that a group of mercenaries, 26 Colombians and two Haitian Americans, were responsible for Moïse's assassination. The majority of the Colombians in Haitian police custody are former soldiers. The Haitian Americans, meanwhile, claim that they had been hired as interpreters for the Spanish-speaking Colombians (Haiti's official languages are Creole and French). Léon Charles, Haiti's chief of police, announced on 11 July that a "key suspect" in the assassination, Haitian national Christian Emmanuel Sanon, had been arrested. The 63-year-old, a former doctor who had been living in Florida, returned to Haiti on a private jet in early June, planning, the police claim, to seize the presidency. Weapons, ammunition, and a US Drug Enforcement Administration cap were found in his possession when he was detained.

A total of 44 people have been arrested in connection with the assassination and a number of others are still being sought, including Joseph Felix Badio, a former official in the Justice Ministry's anti-corruption unit. On 14 September, chief prosecutor Bed-Ford Claude asked a judge to indict Acting Prime Minister Ariel Henry, saying phone records showed Henry had spoken twice with Badio just hours after Moïse's assassination – and only two days after Moïse had appointed him Prime Minister. Henry responded by firing the prosecutor and Justice Minister Rockfeller Vincent, dismissing the claims against him as “baseless innuendo”, even while tacitly admitting that he had talked to Badio.

Longstanding Senator Joseph Lambert, meanwhile, twice tried to have himself sworn as President. On 10 July, he abandoned the swearing-in because of pressure from the US which recognised Henry as interim Prime Minister. Lambert made a second attempt to have himself sworn-in at the Parliament building on 14 September, but a gunfight broke out and he was unable to enter. He again backed down after international diplomatic pressure. There are also tensions between Ariel Henry and Claude Joseph who preceded him as Moïse's interim Prime Minister and was, initially, internationally recognised as acting President after Moïse's killing. Claude Joseph yielded the Prime Ministership to Henry after international mediation on 09 July but remains Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship.

Environment: The earthquake/Storm Grace

Acting Prime Minister Ariel Henry immediately declared a new one-month State of Emergency (this follows a rolling series of States of Emergency earlier this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and vowed to hold elections as soon as possible to restore democracy. The southern and western parts of the country, particularly the Sud, Grand'Anse and Nippes departments (all located on the Tiburon Peninsula), bore the brunt of the quake.



ANALYSIS

Political

The political environment remains extremely unstable with three main factions competing to usurp and even destroy their rivals.

- Henry signed a cross-party deal on 11 September to lead an interim administration until fresh elections at the end of 2022. His supporters include a movement by Michel Martelly, the musician-turned-president who led Haiti from 2011-16. They however appear to want to delay elections beyond the end of the year to allow themselves more time to build influence.
- Credible local reporting suggests that the accusations against Henry were a politically motivated attempt by a faction linked to Moïse, the “Jovenelistes” who fear being excluded from any new government. They are led by his widow, Martine, who was injured in the attack on her husband and now plans to run for president. This group also includes Claude Joseph and Rockefeller Vincent and is pressing for quick elections to prevent their power from slipping away.
- A third group of ‘old guard’ politicians, including Lambert, hoping to use their continued power and influence to secure lucrative state positions.

So far, the international community continues to support Henry. Ambassadors from the so-called Core Group (the US, European Union, France, Germany, Spain, and Brazil, plus the UN and the Organisation of American States) publicly backed him on 15 September. However, there are clear concerns within the group over Henry’s desire to delay elections in order to stay in office.

Humanitarian

Severe access constraints, including earthquake and storm damage, mean that humanitarian assistance is still not reaching the hardest-to-reach rural areas. Clashes between rival gangs and police, following the assassination of Moïse, in July 2021, hampered humanitarian access to at least 19,000 IDPs. Compounding this, the Martissant area, just south of Port-au-Prince, has been controlled by criminal gangs for many months – further complicating use of the main supply route (RN #2) to access the Tiburon Peninsula. Indeed, UN officials reportedly paid off gangs controlling the main access route in the immediate aftermath of Storm Grace.



It should be noted that organisations should have zero tolerance for bribes; however, some organisations allow for meetings with groups where it benefits peacebuilding or humanitarian aid delivery (as was the above case with the UN). However, according to most policies, no money can change hands. Kidnaps and other attacks are also a frequent occurrence in the area. This is compounded by many gangs also having political connections, making them largely invulnerable to the actions of the security forces. Indeed, Dimitri Hérard, the officer responsible for the security of Moïse's home, was already a suspect in a long running investigation by the US Drug Enforcement Administration. Consequently, the US Embassy restricted its staff from non-official travel in the worst affected areas.

02 August 2021: In Martissant neighbourhood, Port-au-Prince, gang violence forced an MSF clinic that served a community of 300,000 people to close.

20 August 2021: In Les Cayes commune, Sud department, earthquake survivors looted a humanitarian convoy.

25 August 2021: In Santo, Croix-des-Bouquets arrondissement, Ouest department, a female aid worker was kidnapped on her way to work by armed perpetrators. As a result of the attack, the NGO closed all of their institutions in Haiti except for a hospital A&E department until the victim was released on 28 August 2021.

Subscribe to our [Aid in Danger Bi-Monthly News Brief](#) for future incident reporting. Download data on [Aid Workers Killed, Kidnapped and Arrested](#) (KKA).

COVID-19-related health risks are mounting as preventative measures, including mask wearing and physical distancing, have been compromised by the impact of the natural disasters. UNICEF estimates that more than 119,000 people are in urgent need of safe water. Longer-term reconstruction and rehabilitation of critical water and sanitation infrastructure and systems are therefore a key priority to prevent disease outbreaks, including COVID-19 and potentially including another cholera outbreak, in the coming months.



PREDICTIONS

- International differences over Haiti's governance (the UN initially supported Joseph as interim President until elections are held, while the US-led Core Group recognised Henry as interim Prime Minister) mean that there is **UNLIKELY** to be strong or coherent leadership for many months, despite Henry now having the support of the wider international community. That said, Henry is probably now the only viable option.
- Despite the US long history of overt military intervention (and covert action against those it opposes), President Biden's withdrawal from Afghanistan and rhetoric about other interventions suggests that any US military or policing action is **HIGHLY LIKELY** even if the security situation deteriorates further. It would also be hugely unpopular in Haiti.
- The UN also has a mixed history in Haiti, which it has admitted. Four deployments in the 1990s all failed to achieve their objectives, while a 2004-2017 deployment brought some stability but was also responsible for inadvertently starting a cholera outbreak that killed 10,000 Haitians. Aid organisations have also been linked to abuses (see [Mitigations](#)). There is, therefore, **UNLIKELY** to be much appetite for another UN peacekeeping mission.
- Moves by the "Jovenelistes" as well as Lambert's two power grabs (the first of which was supported by eight out of ten sitting members of Haiti's Senate) will **LIKELY** compound this instability.

- The government will **HIGHLY LIKELY** struggle to cope with the fallout from the earthquake and Storm Grace, not least because foreign aid is largely delivered through private networks, limiting its ability to coordinate support to the worst-hit areas and also further increasing scope for theft and corruption.
- Gang control of all the major roads that link Port-au-Prince with the rest of the country means that they must either be paid off, as the UN reportedly did (see **Analysis**) or aid supplies must be airlifted. The poor security situation means that there is virtually no prospect of this situation changing now. Indeed, it will **HIGHLY LIKELY** be compounded by more widespread looting of assistance along major roads by communities frustrated with lack of support for them.
- The need for food aid will persist for many months as autumn sowing has largely halted in affected areas to focus on earthquake relief efforts and because of landslide-related soil erosion. Many households also lost agricultural equipment and seeds in the earthquake.
- The risk of a resurgence in water-borne diseases is particularly acute in south-western Haiti, where UNICEF estimates that more than half a million children lack access to shelter.



MITIGATIONS

Stay informed

- Monitor local media for breaking events – such as protests and route / checkpoint access - and be prepared to adjust your plans accordingly.

Travel safety

- Gang violence remains a major concern with powerful groups controlling large parts of Port-au-Prince's shanty towns. Indeed, some reports have noted a rise in kidnap-for-ransom crimes this year, compared to last. Do not attempt to drive through roadblocks. If you do encounter one, turn around and get to a safer area or use a safer route where possible.
- Protests by civil society groups are increasing and while generally peaceful, can become unpredictable. Avoid demonstrations and crowds where possible. Do not attempt to drive through roadblocks set up by demonstrators. If you do encounter one, turn around and get to a safer area or use a safer route where possible.

Ethical standards and training

- NGO workers have been widely accused of sexually exploiting and assaulting women and children during past deployments to Haiti. There is also a history of aid money encouraging further political and institutional corruption.
- Ensure the highest standards in your practices and confidence in your organisation to prevent further reputational damage not only to your own operations but the whole aid sector.
- Reenforce ethical standards and codes of conduct, in particular in relation to safeguarding, respecting human rights and dignity, and addressing modern slavery .
- Ensure compliance with and training on international and national anti-bribery and anti-corruption laws and ensure transparency and accountability.
- Revisit the process and management of whistle-blowing mechanisms.

Safety and security training

- Ensure medical training for staff and medical kits are up to date.
- Ensure relevant security training for staff – both local and international.
- Encourage reporting of security incidents. See **Mobile Guides on DisasterReady** in English and French on security incident reporting for Organisations and Staff.

Safety and Security Incident Information Management (SIIM)

SIIM is a key building block in meeting duty of care obligations towards staff and supports good decision-making for programmes, safety and security, human resources and budgeting.

For organisations

The SIIM Guide for Organisations explains why security incident information is important and how organisations can effectively manage safety and security incident information. This guide is particularly useful for organisations who do not yet have an incident reporting system in place. View the content on a PDF in **Arabic, English** and **French**.

For staff

The SIIM Guide for Staff explains why and how staff should report security incidents to their organisation. This guide can be shared with new staff or on refresher courses to stress the need for incident reporting. View the content on a PDF in **Arabic, English** and **French**.

Our mobile guides are short versions of the SIIM Handbook and Tools in **Arabic, English, French** and **Spanish**.

How to access the guides

If you are new to DisasterReady, you will need to create a free account to access the guide. To sign up:

- Go to **disasterready.org** and click 'Sign Up Today'.
- Fill out all required fields.
- Click 'Log In' when complete.
- Search for 'SIIM'.

The **English** and **French** versions of the Handbook are also available on the ImPortal.

If you are new to SIIM, you might also enjoy listening to **podcasts** discussing SIIM.

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