

Haiti

Situation Report: Fuel and Looting

21 December 2021



Looting and kidnapping will continue to increase as gang control spreads throughout Haiti and prices increase, though a strong acceptance strategy will **LIKELY mitigate against severe violence towards aid organisations.**

Summary

- At least 60 people were killed and a significant number injured on 14 December when a gasoline tanker that had crashed and overturned in Cap-Haïtien city exploded.
- Another fuel tanker explosion that killed one person and injured several was reported in a warehouse in Trou-du-Nord on 10 December. The warehouse had been allegedly stocked with black market fuel that was used to supply the town.
- Fuel has been in short supply for at least the last six months, with gangs – who now control large areas of Haiti - taking advantage of another source of income by controlling access to fuel.
- With Haiti's economy facing significant fiscal stress, contracting by 3.8% in 2020, Finance Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert announced an “adjustment” in fuel prices on 07 December.
- Fuel shortage also affects aid organisations, leading to problems with deliveries of aid.
- The gangs and black-market traders' control of fuel supplies will **HIGHLY LIKELY** extend throughout the country to more rural locations.
- Kidnapping of oil tanker drivers **WILL** continue, as **WILL** the kidnapping of aid workers – with both national and international staff at significant threat of abduction, despite the reported 16 December escape of the remaining members of the Christian Aid Ministries group abducted in October.
- Looting will **HIGHLY LIKELY** increase, with aid supplies held by INGOs at particular risk as prices for all commodities rise.
- A strong acceptance strategy remains key to working in Haiti given the rise in looting, and kidnapping for ransom by gangs.



Analysis

At least 60 people were killed, and a significant number injured, on 14 December when a gasoline tanker that had crashed and overturned in Cap-Haïtien city exploded. The tanker had been carrying 40,000 litres of petrol and a crowd had gathered to siphon off the fuel, which is currently in short supply throughout Haiti. The explosion destroyed 20 residential buildings within the 90 metres plus blast radius – with officials stating that initial casualty numbers did not include those in the homes.

Local hospitals were already stretched by an ongoing shortage of medical supplies and this has been compounded by the incident casualties. At least six people were flown to Port-au-Prince, with others sent to other hospitals in the surrounding area. Another fuel tanker explosion that killed one person and injured several was reported in a warehouse in Trou-du-Nord on 10 December. The warehouse had been allegedly stocked with black market fuel that was used to supply the town.

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Fuel has been in short supply for at least the last six months, with gangs – who now control large areas of Haiti (see [Gangs and the Haitian State, 12 November](#)) – taking advantage of another source of income by controlling access to fuel terminals, hijacking tankers and blocking deliveries. Indeed, lorry drivers concerned over the number of hijackings went on strike in October in an action that went nationwide. Fuel shortages have since been exacerbated by opportunistic black-market merchants and gas station owners who have allegedly stockpiled fuel in order to push fuel prices higher. At the same time [Haiti's economy](#) is facing significant fiscal stress, contracting by 3.8% in 2020, Finance Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert announced an “adjustment” in fuel prices on 07 December. Boisvert, at a press conference held at the official residence of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, stated that the fuel subsidy had “become untenable” [losing the Haitian economy](#) at least 30 billion Gourdes (300 million USD) last year alone. He therefore proposed that from 10 December petrol subsidies would be reduced, increasing prices by 24.37%, whilst diesel would increase by 108.8% and kerosene by 115.9%. This, together with stockpiling by black-marketeers and gang control, will add to the severe shortage of fuel, also affecting aid organisations' ability to work throughout the country. The spiralling price of commodities, including fuel, has driven looting. These rises have been exacerbated by gangs who appear (along with the black-market traders) to be trying to manipulate fuel prices deliberately.



Aid Data Analysis: Looting of aid supplies

This analysis is based on 29 reported incidents of looting and attempted looting of aid supplies identified by Insecurity Insight in open-sources and verified information submitted by Aid in Danger partner agencies between January 2004 and October 2021. The analysis highlights the general patterns in looting targeting aid agencies with the aim to support understanding of when and how aid agencies are affected. It combines some recent events with past events to support the strategic thinking of how to prevent circumstances that increase the risk of looting of said supplies. This data is available on [HDX](#).

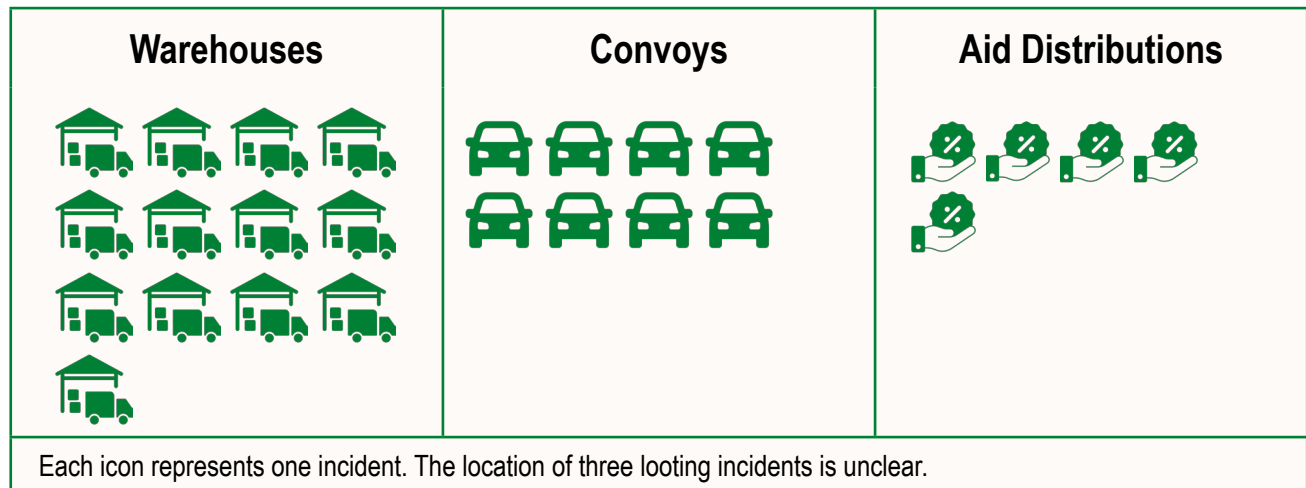


Looting: Refers to the act of stealing, or the taking of goods by force, typically in the midst of a military, political, or other social crisis, such as war, natural disaster, during social crisis, rioting, or when law and civil enforcement are temporarily ineffective.

Key trends

- Looting of aid supplies usually occurs during periods of crisis when particular items are in high demand. Ineffective law enforcement increases the risk of looting.
- Organised criminal gangs carried out over half of all reported looting that affected aid agencies. Most appeared planned.
- Looting also occurred spontaneously as community frustration and anger boil over, but this was reported much less frequently.
- The aid supply items targeted by looters changes over time. There are often clear links between community needs and items targeted by looters:
 - Food and water during shortages or heightened or social crises;
 - Tarpaulin sheets in the rainy season;
 - Shelter provisions following earthquakes and hurricanes, or other natural disasters;
 - Energy supply tools such as solar panels during rehabilitation stages;
 - Jerry cans during fuel shortages or fuel blockades by gangs.

Locations where looting took place



- Warehouses are most frequently the reported target of looting. Looting has also been reported during aid supply distributions and of convoys transporting supplies.
- Looting where aid workers are present can involve threats and violence. For instance, an aid worker was injured when community members looted tarpaulins from a project site during the rainy season. In response, the affected organisation suspended activities in the area.

Perpetrators

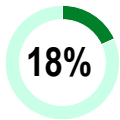
Looting is most frequently carried out by criminals or gangs. However, demonstrators and community members also looted, but less so.

54% Criminals or gangs

- Looted aid supplies from warehouses, often in the evening when staff were not present, or from trucks en route to project sites. One gang-related looting took place at a school where an INGO was distributing hygiene kits.
- Two aid workers were injured by criminals or gangs during lootings in Nord and Sud departments.
- Most gang-related lootings were perpetrated by individuals or small groups of men. However, in one incident 12 men attacked a reported UN contracted truck in Nord department and looted food. A driver was also injured.

28% Community members

- Looted aid supplies from project sites when an opportunity arose, and usually when aid workers were present. For instance, a crowd gathered around a project site where aid workers were disassembling solar panels and stole a number of panels.
- Looted aid supplies from warehouses, trucks or convoys after a natural disaster when the need for basic necessities is higher. In one incident, a WFP truck was looted in response to slow emergency response, and in another, community members went to an INGO warehouse searching for metal sheets to use to cover their homes. A local community leader helped calm the situation; however, a short while later the group returned, broke into the warehouse and took wooden boards, pallets and other items to burn and threatened to come back for the metal sheets.
- There were no reports of community members being armed during looting incidents. However one aid worker was injured when locals looted an INGO's tarpaulins. In response, the INGO temporarily suspended the programme.



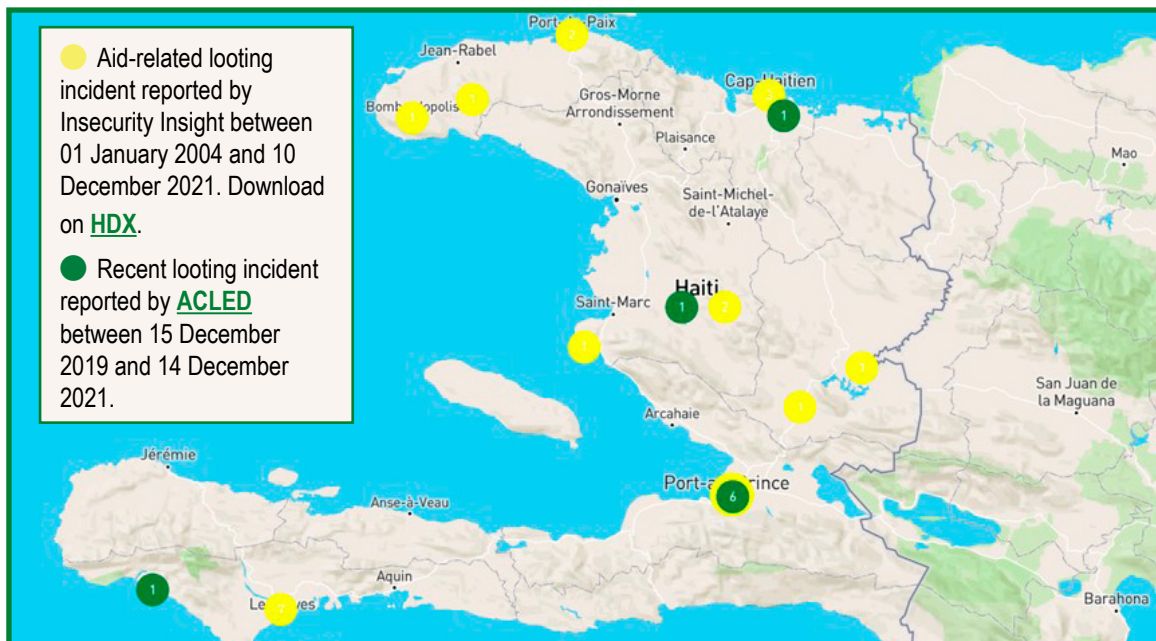
Demonstrators

- Demonstrators looted aid supplies from an UN compound, a project site and a truck after the driver stopped to secure the load.
- In all but one incident, the demonstrators were unarmed.
- The armed incident took place in 2008 during which protesters broke into a UN compound, ransacked the office, looted food and fired weapons at staff.
- There were no reports of aid workers being injured during looting by demonstrators.

Reported locations of looting¹

Looting has been reported from many locations in Haiti. Kidnappings of aid workers, by contrast, have mainly been reported from Port au Prince and Croix des Bouquets.

Please see our report 'Gangs and the Haitian state' for recent trends in aid worker kidnappings in Haiti and in-depth analysis on gangs and their areas of operations. Available in [English](#) and [French](#). Download data on aid workers kidnapped in Haiti on [HDX](#).



Prediction

- The gangs and black-market traders' control of fuel supplies will **HIGHLY LIKELY** extend throughout the country to more rural locations. This will increase the risk of looting of fuel supplies as well as other items that may be required to transport or manage fuel, such as jerry cans or funnels.
- Some aid agencies have adapted practices to address their own fuel shortages, for example, the UN World Food Program (WFP) has used barges rather than trucks to send supplies to the south of the country. However, smaller aid organisations will find such methods too expensive. Gangs are also **LIKELY** to try and control such routes – especially if they feel that a potential source of income or loss of control is at stake. Indeed, a spokesperson from the Center for Analysis and Research in Human Rights (CARDH), estimated that gangs “currently control 60 per cent of the national territory, including strategic axes for the country”. Within Port-au-Prince areas such as Martissant (currently an area controlled by a gang leader - Izo – who has directly threatened anyone supporting the neighbouring Ti-Bois gang) will remain no-go areas for both international aid organisations and Haitian police.

- Kidnapping of oil tanker drivers WILL continue, as WILL the kidnapping of aid workers – with both local and international staff at significant threat of abduction despite the reported 16 December [escape](#) of the Christian Aid Ministries group abducted in October. The details of the escape are still emerging but in such cases, intense negotiations between aid groups, the FBI, US govt officials and the 400 Mawozo group would normally have taken place.
- CARDH have reported that more than 782 kidnappings for ransom have occurred since the start of 2021 (the Haitian police have 460 kidnappings so far reported). Indeed, the situation in the country has led to some aid organisations looking to relocate staff at risk – with World Vision US reporting it had relocated 11 out of 320 employees in the country as a result of violence including kidnapping.
- Looting will HIGHLY LIKELY increase, with aid supplies held by INGOs also at risk. If prices for fuel, food and medical supplies continue to rise, food and medical supplies will also come at a higher risk of looting. The Haitian police are outgunned and out-resourced – a point also emphasized by former Secretary of State for Public Security Réginald Delva who has warned that “armed bandits are better equipped and seem better organised than the National Police of Haiti (PNH)”.



Mitigation

Use a strong acceptance strategy

A strong acceptance strategy remains key to working in Haiti. The rise in looting, and kidnapping for ransom by gangs makes it essential to understand and communicate with local population and actors, including local gangs. Community leaders, including church leaders, even those with questionable reputations, can at times function as intermediaries between gangs and aid agencies.



Acceptance

- Be clear about who you are, your agency's background and priorities, where your funding comes from and how your programmes are developed.
- If you are a faith-based or secular organisation, be clear about how this does or does not affect your work, especially in a strong religious environment. Also be aware of how you will be perceived.
- Understand who your partners are, how they are perceived and what impact your relationship will have on their, and your own, acceptance.
- Ensure stakeholders are engaged before commencing any work.
- Have a rigorous complaints system and be seen to follow up on concerns.
- Do not isolate your staff from communities. Stay visible and accessible

Acceptance has to be earned and can be lost very easily, and the behaviour of one responder can affect the whole community.

Acceptance must be approached proactively. See this [GISF guide](#) for more information.

Integration of an acceptance strategy into programme implementation

- A successful acceptance strategy works best when deeply embedded in programme delivery. This requires good communication and collaboration between security and programme staff on the ground. A complex security context like Haiti requires that programme implementation includes careful planning of communication and relationship building to maintain access as well as staff and asset security. Monitoring, evaluation, adaptation and learning of programmes should include an assessment of the acceptance strategy to allow continuous assessing of access and security.

Guarding against looting

Use an acceptance strategy that:

- Understands shortages and anticipates items that may be at risk of looting.
- Ensures that such stocks remain outside of gang control and beyond the reach of black market traders.
- Maintains links to and through local leaders with the standing to make moral appeals against looting.
- Ensures good communication before and during any aid distribution.

Verify and add additional physical protection measures, such as strong locks on warehouses.

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[Haiti](#) home page and [mailing list](#).

Footnote

¹ This map is based on two datasets:

- The yellow dots show incidents of looting and attempted looting of aid supplies between 01 January 2004 and 10 December 2021. Available on [HDX](#).
- The green dots show incidents from the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) dataset and include the ACLED events covering looting. ACLED [database attribution policy](#). Accessed 15 December 2021.

