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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

THE SITUATION IN HAITI

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Abstract:

Haiti's political and security situation has been riddled with instability for decades. However, conditions have deteriorated significantly in the aftermath of the catastrophic January 12, 2010 earthquake that destroyed much of Port-au-Prince and other urban centers throughout the country. The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and its successor the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) made critical progress along several security dimensions, including improving the Haitian National Police force and the judiciary. However, after the dissolution of these missions, Haiti has been ravaged by political assassinations, rampant gang violence, and environmental disasters. It is now the role of the Security Council and the wider international community to devote considerable energy to working with Haitians to implement comprehensive long-term solutions that will stabilize Haiti's political and security situation, providing true opportunities for sustainable development.

Introduction

The most important security situation, at least for the UN Security Council, in the Caribbean remains the instability and profound lack of development in Haiti. Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and has suffered from political violence and instability for many decades. According to recent statistics, 30.32 percent of all Haitian citizens live below the extreme poverty line and live on about \$2.15¹ a day, on top of that Haiti ranked 163 out of 191 states in the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) for 2021/2022.² Elements of gradual progress that were previously visible have been reversed in recent years, particularly as a result of the January 12, 2010 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, and a subsequent eight major earthquakes that have occurred since then. In the most recent ranking of The Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index, Haiti is ranked 10th in the world, with a 3.2-point increase in fragility from last year.³ Haiti has also had an insurmountable food insecurity issue, with an estimated 4.9 million people not having adequate access to food.⁴ These issues have been greatly exacerbated by wide-scale political instability which culminated in the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021.

¹ "Overview," World Bank, n.d., <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>.

² Nations, United. "Human Development Index." Human Development Reports, January 23, 2023. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>.

³ "The Fund for Peace." Fragile States Index. Accessed June 12, 2023. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/>.

⁴ "Haiti: Amid Rising Hunger Levels, 'World Cannot Wait for Disaster before It Acts', WFP Warns | UN News." United Nations. Accessed June 12, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134972#:~:text=Half%20the%20population%20-%204.9%20million,the%20number%20tripling%20since%202016>.

Haiti's History

Haiti's recent history is marked by violence and foreign intervention. It was once a profitable French colony based on sugar plantations worked by African slaves. After a successful slave rebellion, Haiti declared independence in 1804.⁵ Relations with neighbors like the Dominican Republic have been volatile, leading to invasions and violence. The United States also had a problematic relationship with Haiti, invading and occupying it from 1915 to 1934 for various reasons, including security concerns and economic interests.⁶ Haiti's domestic politics have been unstable, with figures like Papa Doc Duvalier, Baby Doc Duvalier, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and Ariel Henry dominating its politics since 1957. The oppressive security forces of Papa Doc and the Tonton Macoutes caused internal displacement and hindered the development of civil society and the rule of law.⁷ Corruption is deeply ingrained in Haitian society, including within the Haitian National Police. Haiti's history is characterized by a cycle of violence, foreign interference, and political instability.

The period from 1957 to 1986 constituted almost three decades of the Duvalier family's rule. The Duvalier family counted on the support of the Haitian elite, the military, foreign allies, including the United States and France, and at least the tacit support of the Catholic Church. While many priests and nuns worked with the poor and vulnerable in Haiti throughout this time, the Church itself rarely criticized the regime openly; one crucial exception to this was when the Pope excommunicated Papa Doc for appointing his own chosen priests in Haiti.⁸ However, a new generation of priests, steeped in liberation theology, began to openly criticize the Duvalier regime and call for mass demonstrations against the government and the Tonton Macoutes.⁹ In response to ongoing demonstrations and strikes against the Duvalier regime, the government escalated repression. Eventually, in February 1986, Jean-Claude Duvalier fled Haiti for a luxurious life in France. As the nation grappled with transitioning away from Duvalier rule, a significant mass political movement emerged, aiming for more profound changes than just removing the Duvalier family. Despite facing significant violence and intimidation tactics from various factions, including paramilitaries and supporters of the exiled Duvalier family, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a popular liberation theology priest, secured a two-thirds majority in the 1990 elections.¹⁰

⁵ "Office of the Historian," <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1784-1800/haitian-rev>.

⁶ "Office of the Historian," n.d., <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/haiti>.

⁷ "Haiti3," n.d., <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/Haiti3.htm>.

⁸ Gail Pellett, "Ti Legliz: Liberation Theology in Haiti | Gail Pellett Productions," Gail Pellett Productions, August 1, 2011, <https://gailpellettproductions.com/ti-legliz-liberation-theology-in-haiti/>.

⁹ Reed Brody, "Haiti's Rendezvous with History," Human Rights Watch, March 27, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/04/14/haitis-rendezvous-history/case-jean-claude-duvalier>.

¹⁰ "Haiti's Democratic Challenge on JSTOR," n.d., <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3992382>.

Aristide's Rein and Its Impacts

After his election in 1990, Aristide brought a new sense of hope and change within Haiti, especially for Haiti's poorer citizens which includes those who reside in Cité Soleil. Despite the hope for change and reconstruction within Haiti, Aristide's first term as president was cut short after he was overthrown not even seven months into his presidency. The coup resulted in significant casualties, with at least 300 people killed on the first night and many more deaths in Cité Soleil alone. This violent group assumed power following Aristide's overthrow and led to nearly three years of oppression of the region specifically the imprisonment and torture of Aristide's supporters.¹¹

Following three years of continuous anarchy within Haiti, a US-led peacekeeping mission was sent to Haiti which ultimately restored Aristide as Haiti's president.¹² However, despite his being overthrown and exiled less than 4 years prior, he agreed to resign from his role as president at the end of 1995 since the Haitian constitution does not allow for consecutive presidential terms which prevented Aristide from running for reelection in the fall of 1995. Following his resignation¹³, Aristide's political ally Rene Préval won the 1995 presidential elections with widespread support due to his close ties to Aristide. However, Aristide would break his ties with Préval over disagreements regarding a new International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment plan and his political allies would achieve a parliamentary majority in the 2000 elections.

Following Aristides' 2nd reelection in 2000, he was met with backlash and claims of flawed elections and corruption within the Haitian political system. This led to further polarization within an already divided region due to continuous changes in the nation's leaders and political bodies. As the years went on Aristides' popularity only continued to decline mainly due to his strained relationships with the US and France. Foreign aid donors recognized the instability of the region and began to pull aid from the region which led to a budget crisis within the nation. As the dominos continued to fall, Aristide eventually ended up fleeing due to the downward spiral of the nation as a whole, but he claimed that his fleeing was due to "US pressure"¹⁴. The United Nations identified that the situation in Haiti was becoming a threat that may cause further instability in neighboring regions and ultimately decided to implement the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

¹¹ PRISM, National Defense University, "Chapter 3 Haiti: The Gangs of Cité Soleil," n.d., <https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/780129/chapter-3-haiti-the-gangs-of-cit-soleil/>.

¹² "UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN HAITI (UNMIH) - Background (Full Text)," n.d., <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unmihbackgr2.html>.

¹³ "Haiti: Constitution, 1987," 1987, <https://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Haiti/haiti1987.html>.

¹⁴ BBC News, "Profile: Jean-Bertrand Aristide," *BBC News*, March 3, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-12633115>.

MINUSTAH

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established in 2004 in response to the many years of political turmoil and violence which was called upon by the new Haitian government as well as the international community which highlighted that the restoration of peace and security within Haiti was an urgent matter.¹⁵ The establishment of MINUSTAH was of dire need due to the continuous violence that ran rampant throughout the nation and led to many violations of human rights in the region. MINUSTAH was also established to combat the previous claims of corruption within Haiti's election systems. MINUSTAH aimed to support Haiti's political transition by assisting with the conduct of free and fair elections, promoting good governance, and facilitating political dialogue among various stakeholders. MINUSTAH also played a crucial role in reversing the gaps within Haiti's public health system which allowed challenges such as the cholera outbreak within Haiti to be properly addressed alongside humanitarian agencies which provided aid to those in need.

While MINUSTAH was established with clear goals such as those listed above, we cannot measure the effectiveness of the mission without understanding the ways the mission contributed to its goals. Within the MINUSTAH mission, many programs were established to disarm and demobilize armed groups and former combatants to prevent another coup such as those that overthrew Aristide and sparked the many years of instability in the region. The mission also aided in logistical and security support of national elections and played a key role in the 2006 and 2010 elections where the main goal was to ensure the democratic process was carried out smoothly and fairly.¹⁶ The mission also worked alongside the Haitian national police to improve the relationship between law enforcement and the community, but also improve the justice and human rights system within the nation. One example of this is when MINUSTAH officials helped train judges and legal professionals to establish a democratic system to combat human rights violations and establish systems to report cases of violations within Haiti.

Despite MINUSTAH's main mission being to reestablish safety and security within the nation of Haiti, it came with unfortunate setbacks and backlashes. Allegations of serious misconduct, including sexual assault and violence, by MINUSTAH peacekeepers and police officers have compromised MINUSTAH's overall effectiveness at times. In 2007, the Office of Internal Oversight Services ordered the repatriation of 124 MINUSTAH peacekeepers for disciplinary issues, with 111 of those repatriated peacekeepers coming from Sri Lanka. With 8 of the current 15 Security Council members contributing to MINUSTAH, the Security Council has a direct interest in improving the performance of MINUSTAH personnel¹⁷; Negative headlines about

¹⁵ "MINUSTAH," United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d., <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minustah>.

¹⁶ "Security Council, Renewing Haiti Mission Mandate in Resolution 1944 (2010), Looks to Review of Situation after Pending Elections, New Government | UN Press," October 14, 2010, <https://press.un.org/en/2010/sc10054.doc.htm>.

¹⁷ "Haiti: Over 100 Sri Lankan Blue Helmets Repatriated on Disciplinary Grounds – UN," UN News, November 2, 2007, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2007/11/238162>.

soldiers and police officers engaging in misconduct on UN peacekeeping missions can prove rather embarrassing in world capitals.¹⁸ Demands for the removal of MINUSTAH staff, such as occurred in Les Cayes and other sites of rioting and unrest in April 2008²⁰, will only increase if food and fuel price increases as well as misconduct by peacekeepers continue.

Despite the setback of the mission, on October 15, 2017, MINUSTAH closed its doors. This came with a proclamation from Sandra Honoré, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Haiti and head of MINUSTAH at the time. "Haiti is now in a position to move forward and consolidate the stability that has been obtained, as a framework for continued social and economic development," she stated¹⁹. And while the initial Stabilization Mission came to an end, Members of the Security Council and other officials recognized that Haiti still had work to do. This led to the creation of MINUJUSTH, or the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. This new mission leads with a more narrow focus, specifically on assisting the Government in strengthening rule of law institutions, reinforcing national police capacities, and engaging in human rights monitoring, reporting, and analysis. In addition to this mission, a UN presence has continued in the form of aid from UNICEF, and a regional arm of the World Health Organization as the country struggles with a cholera outbreak. The mandate of MINUJUSTH extended from April 2017 to October 2019, and its conclusion marked the end of United Nations peacekeeping support in Haiti.

Post-MINUSTAH & MINUJUSTH

While the Security Council and other UN representatives determined Haiti was in a place of stability in 2017, it is clear that in recent years that has not been the case. When President Jovenel Moïse assumed office on February 7, 2017, after a series of disputed and close elections, it was thought that Haiti was steadily heading to a place of stability regarding governmental institutions. However, on July 7, 2021, President Moïse was assassinated in his residence by a group of armed mercenaries, including 26 Colombians and two Haitian Americans. While criminal investigations have taken place over the last two years to bring the group responsible to justice, the country has spiraled.²⁰

This attack on the nation's democratic system has only set them back to similar, if not worse standards of living compared to when Aristide was president. From shootouts with suspected assassins and protests running rampant in the street, violence within Haiti is at an all-time high. The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) reported 1,074 intentional homicides and 328 kidnappings from January to August 2021. Intentional homicides increased by 14 percent,

¹⁸ "Haiti: Over 100 Sri Lankan Blue Helmets Repatriated on Disciplinary Grounds – UN," UN News, November 2, 2007, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2007/11/238162>.

¹⁹ "INTERVIEW: Haiti on Path to Stability, Development Thanks to UN Mission, Says Envoy," UN News, October 5, 2018,

²⁰ UN. Security Council (59th year : 2004), "Resolution 1542 (2004) /: Adopted by the Security Council at Its 4961st Meeting, on 30 April 2004," United Nations Digital Library System, April 30, 2004, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/520532?ln=en>.

compared with 944 cases in the same period of 2020, and kidnappings continued to rise, compared with 234 for all of 2020.²¹ According to the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI) and the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) gender-based violence is chronically under-reported.²²

The assassination of Haiti's president has caused the nation to relapse to conditions common before the UN missions MINUSTAH & MINUJUSTH. From February to August 2021 the BINUH documented 32 cases of attacks against the same legal professionals and judges that MINUSTAH established to maintain integrity in Haiti's elections. The attack on Haiti's judicial systems and its practices has only bled into its prisons which has caused them to become severely overcrowded with many detainees living in inhumane conditions. The issue of political unrest will only get worse if this democratic system is not reestablished and the people of Haiti are equally represented. Within the past year, the last 10 democratically elected senators' terms have expired and it begs the question of what the nation as a whole will develop into if this crisis is not resolved.

Haiti, already grappling with a history of political instability, economic challenges, and natural disasters, faced even greater turmoil with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued environmental impacts. These factors have contributed to a cycle of civil unrest and instability in the country. Haiti, just like many other nations all around the world, was ill-equipped to handle a public health crisis to the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic. Limited healthcare infrastructure, shortages of medical supplies, and a lack of access to adequate healthcare services posed significant challenges and ultimately fed the flame of anarchy and chaos within the already hurting nation. According to the WHO website "In Haiti, from 3 January 2020 to 6 September 2023, there have been 34,301 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 860 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 2 June 2023, a total of 664,150 vaccine doses have been administered."²³

Even while dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, there were other environmental factors that contributed to the ongoing conflict within Haiti. On August 14, 2021, a significant earthquake with a magnitude of 7.2 struck the southwest of Haiti. The earthquake occurred at a shallow depth of only 6.2 miles (10 km), which typically leads to more extensive damage. Comparatively, this earthquake was located about 46.6 miles (75 km) west of the catastrophic 2010 earthquake, which had a magnitude of 7.0 and occurred at a depth of 8.1 miles (13 km). Roughly a million people lived within 31 miles (50 kilometers) of the earthquake's epicenter, with approximately 234,000 living within nine miles (15 km). The 7.2 magnitude 2021 quake claimed over 2,000 lives and affected more than 1.2 million people, including 540,000 children,

²¹ "Haiti Needs a New, Improved UN Mission | Brookings," Brookings, March 9, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/haiti-needs-a-new-improved-un-mission/>.

²² "Haiti," *Human Rights Watch*, January 14, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/haiti>.

²³ "Haiti: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data," WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data, n.d., <https://covid19.who.int/region/amro/country/ht>.

as reported by UNICEF.²⁴ As the community banded together to recover from the devastating earthquake, not even two days later Haiti was hit directly by Tropical Depression Grace. This further complicated humanitarian and response efforts, particularly the distribution of supplies. Many individuals who had lost their homes or were afraid of aftershocks sought shelter under tarps or attempted to find alternative places of refuge.

International Systems and Haiti

Haiti has had a long relationship with needing and receiving international support from non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations alike. While Political Missions in Haiti have come to an end, there are still several international organizations operating inside the country, providing aid and institutional support. One example is the collaboration of the UNDP and the Government of Japan which in 2022 signed a \$6.3 million agreement to address various challenges in Haiti. This includes strengthening national security, improving health facilities, and preparing rapid response teams for emergencies. A significant portion of the funding, \$3 million, will go towards the "Reconstruction of Health Care Facilities in the Great South" initiative to rehabilitate and reconstruct public health infrastructure in the southern part of Haiti, which was severely damaged by the 7.2 magnitude earthquake in August 2021. Another \$3.3 million will support capacity-building for the national police in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to enhance security and address institutional weaknesses within local law enforcement. This initiative is crucial in light of Haiti's complex challenges and its vulnerability to natural disasters.²⁵

Conclusion: How can Stability Permanently Return to Haiti

Haiti's tenuous situation is not solely Haiti's or the Caribbean's concern. State failure is a serious problem for the international community because of the ever-present concerns about economic contagion, refugee outflows, and the likelihood that criminal and terrorist organizations will use failed states as havens and sanctuaries. The persistent state failure in Haiti demands urgent attention and collective action from the international community, local stakeholders, and concerned citizens alike. Despite numerous projects and missions aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Haitian people, the situation remains dire. It is evident that a new approach is needed, one that is rooted in sustainable development, local empowerment, and a long-term commitment to change. It is our moral obligation to respond to this ongoing crisis with a renewed sense of purpose, empathy, and commitment. By implementing a comprehensive and sustainable development agenda and by involving local communities in the decision-making process, we can help Haiti break free from the cycle of state failure and pave the way for a brighter future for its people

²⁴ Kathryn Reid, "Haiti Earthquake: Facts, FAQs, and How to Help," *World Vision*, September 5, 2023, <https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/haiti-earthquake-facts>.

²⁵ "Japan Contributes US\$ 6.3 Million to Support Haitian-Led Efforts to Improve Health and Security | United Nations Development Programme."

Guiding Questions for Debate:

What are the root causes of the current political crisis in Haiti, including issues related to governance, corruption, and electoral disputes and how can the international community help facilitate a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the political turmoil in Haiti?

How can the UN and other organizations contribute to improving security and strengthening the rule of law in Haiti, and what role can peacekeeping missions play in addressing security concerns? What are examples of these missions and how did they pan out in the long term?

How can regional organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS), contribute to addressing the situation in Haiti, and what cooperation can be fostered among neighboring countries to support Haiti?

What are the immediate humanitarian needs in Haiti, including food, healthcare, and shelter and how can the international community collaborate to address these urgent needs effectively?

What is the ideal vision for the future of Haiti, considering political stability, economic prosperity, and social well-being and how can the international community work together to help Haiti achieve this vision?

Guiding questions for position papers

1. How has my country been involved in Haiti's past political, economic, or social developments?
2. How does the situation in Haiti affect my country's citizens or interests, especially in terms of humanitarian issues?
3. How do regional organizations (e.g., OAS, CARICOM) or global institutions (e.g., UN) influence my country's approach to the situation in Haiti and are there any resolutions or agreements that my country has endorsed or supported related to Haiti?
4. Does the instability in Haiti pose any national security concerns for my country and are there any transnational issues like drug trafficking or illegal immigration related to Haiti that my country is concerned about?
5. Is my country actively involved in any peacekeeping or conflict resolution efforts related to Haiti and what are my country's perspectives on the international community's role in resolving the crisis in Haiti?
6. What does my country believe is necessary for Haiti's long-term stability and development and how can my country contribute to or support efforts to address the root causes of the crisis in Haiti?

Resource Review

United Nations Documents

UN Security Council Resolution 2410 (2018): https://bit.ly/FHSMUN_2410

This resolution extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and called for the continued reduction of the mission's military component while strengthening its police component. In a debate, delegates can refer to this resolution to discuss the UN's role in maintaining security and stability in Haiti and the gradual transition from a military to a police-oriented mission.

UN Security Council Resolution 2350 (2017): https://bit.ly/FHSMUN_2350

This resolution established MINUJUSTH, the successor mission to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). It emphasized the importance of the rule of law, human rights, and the need for effective policing in Haiti. In a debate, delegates can highlight the transition from MINUSTAH to MINUJUSTH and discuss the evolving priorities in Haiti, including the focus on justice and human rights.

UN Security Council Resolution 2180 (2014): https://bit.ly/FHSMUN_2180

This resolution extended the mandate of MINUSTAH and emphasized the importance of free and fair elections in Haiti. Delegates can use this resolution to discuss the role of the UN in supporting democratic processes and election monitoring in Haiti. This resolution highlights the various aspects that the UNSC aimed to secure these elections in order to allow for democratically elected leaders to restore peace in Haiti.

UN Security Council Resolution 1542 (2004): https://bit.ly/FHSMUN_1542

This resolution established MINUSTAH in response to the political and security crisis in Haiti. It called for the restoration of constitutional order, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of stability and development. Delegates can use this resolution to discuss the historical context of MINUSTAH's establishment understand its initial objectives in Haiti and highlight the flaws of these programs for future development.

UN General Assembly Resolution 68/247 (2014): https://bit.ly/FHSMUN_68_247

This resolution expressed the General Assembly's support for Haiti's long-term development and post-earthquake recovery efforts. It highlighted the need for international assistance in areas such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Delegates can use this resolution to emphasize the importance of international cooperation and assistance in addressing Haiti's development challenges and highlight the wins and flaws of previous operations in order to create a sustainable plan for Haiti.

