

Protests against political and social crisis continue in Haiti as imperialist powers consider military intervention

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Mass protests escalated across Haiti after weeks of resistance to the conditions of poverty and oppression millions are facing. This is combined with political opposition to Prime Minister Ariel Henry, widely perceived as a pawn of the US ruling elite, who protesters are demanding be ousted from power. In response to some of the largest demonstrations in recent years, international media outlets and imperialist governments alike are now mulling over or explicitly calling for a foreign military intervention to crack down on dissent.

The opposition to the corrupt political establishment, intolerable social climate and decades-long imperialist oppression is being expressed in targeted attacks against critical institutions widely seen as bastions of neocolonial domination over the small island.

A local bank in the coastal commune Léogâne, Unibank, was one of several banks across the country which protesters attacked and partially burned. Protesters sprayed graffiti on the building reading “Down with USA” and “Down with USA and Ariel Henry.” In Jeremie, a commune in Haiti’s southeast region, protesters were filmed burning down and ransacking Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) facilities, while other NGOs around the country are reporting being attacked.

NGOs have been the source of immense contempt by the population following the devastating 2010 earthquake. Thousands of NGOs have come to operate around 80 percent of the country’s basic public services, ostensibly enlisted to rebuild infrastructure and provide long-term employment to jobless locals. They have instead siphoned off millions in relief money that has gone totally unaccounted for while highly paid staffers have profited from the country’s misery.

Other instances included large-scale arson attacks, including the burning down of barricades in Port-au-Prince after Henry slandered protesters as “gangs” funded by local businesses and foreign interests. The notion that the unrest in Haiti is primarily the product of gang violence rather than raging social inequality is being repeated in ruling circles. During his speech at the United Nations General Assembly meeting on Wednesday, UN Secretary General António Guterres said gangs in Haiti were “destroying the very building blocks of society.”

Guterres has joined Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader, whose government has clamored in recent weeks for the return of a UN “peacekeeping” force like MINUSTAH, a Brazilian-led international military occupation that was tasked with suppressing opposition in Haiti’s shantytowns after the overthrow of elected president and former priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Perhaps the most cynical and hypocritical comments from the General Assembly came from Sébastien Carrière, Canada’s

ambassador to Port-au-Prince, who said “the international community needs to get together and support Haiti.” Carrière lauded the Haitian police, declaring that he had the “utmost respect for the [police] and the work they are doing,” and that what was missing in resolving the crisis was “political actors getting together and also doing the best they can to come to an inclusive accord that doesn’t leave anybody behind and puts the country back on the right track.”

Videos circulated widely on social media have refuted this disgusting flattery, clearly documenting the same Haitian police, trained and armed by the various imperialist powers, beating, maiming and gunning down protesters over the past month. In this, Canada has been a complicit actor, providing \$42 million in funding for the Haiti’s security force this year alone.

The so-called “political actors” cited by Carrière have been handpicked by the imperialist powers themselves, above all Henry, to form Haiti’s government following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021. This was done through the Core Group of imperialist ambassadors operating in Haiti who saw Henry as a more auspicious figurehead for a puppet regime than interim president Claude Joseph.

The unelected Henry was carefully selected due to his politically criminal history as an operative for the US government stretching back to the early 2000s, when he led the Democratic Convergence (CD) movement which played a critical role in toppling Aristide in a US-backed coup. Leading up to the coup, CD made explicit appeals to the US for an invasion and the restoration of the violent Haitian army that tortured and killed thousands in the 1990s. Henry’s organization provided political cover for the CIA-trained and funded death squads and former army officers that would carry out Aristide’s violent overthrow.

Prior to becoming prime minister, Henry served in ministerial positions under the presidencies of US lackeys Michel Martelly and Moïse, the former being installed in 2011 through fraudulent elections orchestrated by Hillary Clinton, before placing Moïse in power as his handpicked successor in another entirely bogus electoral process.

Both Martelly and Moïse were infamous for their connections to Haiti’s rapacious business elite and for carrying out brutal police crackdowns on protestors in Haiti’s shantytowns. In the waning days of his term, Martelly relied on the Haitian police and BOID (Departmental Brigade of Operations and Interventions), a paramilitary unit that was directed at crushing opposition to his rampant corruption, while Haitians starved on poverty wages and dilapidated infrastructure.

Just recently a lawsuit was brought against Martelly which alleged Haitian officials and multinational corporations conspired to fix the prices of remittances and telephone calls from the United States to Haiti, diverting millions in tax funds into private hands instead of filling the government's treasury. Haiti's intractable political crisis came to a head during the presidency of Moïse, who gutted the federal legislature, judiciary and local governments and defied his constitutional term limit in his efforts to inaugurate a dictatorial regime.

The gangs that are now violently terrorizing the nation were largely a creation of Moïse. In 2018, these gang forces carried out the La Saline massacre that gruesomely killed 59 people in a neighborhood that was the scene of protests against his government. Police agent Jimmy "BBQ" Cherizier is a former police officer who participated directly in the assault and subsequently founded the G9 Family and Allies gang federation, employed to intimidate voters during elections and quell social unrest.

Large-scale protests against Moïse erupted after a criminal investigation found that Moïse and his political cronies embezzled millions through a development fund, PetroCaribe program, that was subsidized by Venezuela that was intended to help low-income Haitians.

The massive resistance of Haiti's oppressed working class, who face super-exploitation by American apparel and other companies, has led to a propaganda offensive by foreign diplomats and strategists to scapegoat gangs and oligarchs as responsible for the uprisings. Juan Gonzalez, the National Security Council's senior director for the Western Hemisphere and a special assistant to Biden, said during an appearance Monday at the Washington D.C.-based United States Institute of Peace meeting that Haiti's instability was being financed by people "who have mansions in different parts of the world, and are paying for people to go into the streets."

The Jeff Bezos-owned *Washington Post*, a propaganda conduit for the US military and intelligence agencies, is once again trumpeting another colonial-style intervention in Haiti. The *Post* writers reprised their comments from an editorial last year following the assassination of Moïse calling for "boots on the ground" or another violent military intervention. They complain about the "absence of muscular action by outside actors," and argue "propping up the prime minister [Henry]" is a mistake. The *Post* editorial insists that outside some foreign expedition on the island and external force, any policy decision in Haiti is an "abdication of responsibility."

Aside from falsely conflating the violent carnage now being meted out by the likes of G9 and its family with the genuine expressions of popular anger against poverty and political repression, the *Post* editorial entirely brushes over the fact that the social disaster and gang warfare are result of actions of Henry and his predecessors who have received the full backing of Democratic and Republican administrations alike.

A major US newspaper calling for the renewal of direct colonial-style domination of Haiti has frightening implications, as it recalls the two-decade-long US Marine occupation of Haiti after President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was assassinated. This ushered in more than a century of imperialist plunder that saw hundreds of thousands killed under the Duvalier dictatorships, US -backed military juntas and a 13-year-long UN military operation. American intelligence agencies and State Department officials funded death squads that murdered without restraint in Haiti's slums. It is this century of imperialist domination that has cemented a legacy of abysmal economic

conditions out of which the present crisis has emerged.

Henry and other top government officials are also now pleading for international intervention amid the irresolvable political conflicts raging the country. Foreign Minister Jean Victor Geneus told UN delegates in New York on Saturday that Haiti was facing a multifaceted sociopolitical and economic crisis that is being exacerbated by gang terror and could "only be solved with the effective support of our partners." Geneus cited Henry's own words, saying the prime minister had "no desire to stay in power longer than necessary" and appealed to the regime's foreign patrons to facilitate an electoral coalition.

The bloody fighting between the various gang organizations is a testament to the hostility among rival sections of the Haitian ruling elite. Cherizier was enlisted by Haiti's big business families to control the importation of food, fuel and other lucrative goods.

A section of Haiti's ruling-elite is turning to ever more violent means to produce the conditions for Henry's overthrow to consolidate control over Haiti's most profitable sectors.

At the General Assembly Biden issued bland platitudes, professing his intention to "stand with our neighbor in Haiti as it faces political-fueled gang violence and an enormous human crisis," without making any long-term policy decision to address the crisis.

Although the Biden administration has not unveiled any immediate plans for intervention, the US has maintained its criminal anti-immigrant policies that have placed Haitian migrants under conditions tantamount to torture, while continuing to deport refugees in droves without any consideration of their asylum claims. A new report from Amnesty International documents discriminatory and degrading ill treatment of Haitian asylum seekers that have accompanied the mass expulsions under the Title 42 Trump-era policy which Biden has continued.

Whatever the coloration of any political regime that emerges from crisis, either the prolongation of Henry's rule or the cobbling together of a coalition including his political opponents, what is certain is that the US and world imperialism will arrange a factional alliance as grasping and corrupt as all the other governments that followed the 2004 coup. The self-serving lies about lending "support" to Haiti are not to ensure democracy, but to facilitate a new round of fraudulent elections like all the ones since the installation of Martelly.

To end the social calamity they face, the Haitian masses must initiate an independent political struggle led by the working class, at the head of the oppressed masses and in the closest unity with their class brothers and sisters internationally. The conditions facing Haitians are far from isolated experiences, as protests and strikes against the insufferable life created by capitalism have erupted in Sri Lanka, the US and worldwide. The road forward lies in creating a unified basis for a movement of the international working class for socialism.



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