

At Washington's behest, Kenyan President Ruto moves ahead with police deployment to Haiti

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On Thursday, Kenya announced that it is moving ahead with the US backed and developed plan for it to lead a Multinational Security Support (MSS) intervention in Haiti to bloodily restore bourgeois “law and order” in the Western Hemisphere’s poorest country. The Caribbean island-nation has been overrun by criminal gangs, most of which have close ties to rival factions of Haiti’s ruling elite.

While cast as a response to the desperate plight of the Haitian people, the true purpose of the MSS is to uphold US, Canadian and French imperialist interests and domination over the Caribbean.

The mission will see more than 1,000 Kenyan police, drawn from a force notorious for its brutality and criminality, working with the thoroughly corrupt Haitian National Police and security forces from Caribbean Community member-states Jamaica, Bahamas, Guyana and Antigua and Barbuda. Last week, Benin pledged to send 2,000 troops. Burundi, Chad and Senegal have also pledged troops. All of them have a track record of mass violence against their respective populations.

The mission is not only deeply opposed by the vast majority of Haiti’s impoverished workers and toilers, but also by the Kenyan masses. On Thursday, Kenyan government spokesperson Isaac Mwaura criticized Kenyans for not supporting a “mission to foster peace.” “Why are we complaining on matters of security when we have been given such help before? Let us be patriotic and support the government” he declared.

In the days before Mwaura’s remarks, the thuggish nature of the whole mission had, in fact, been on full display.

On March 1, Kenyan President William Ruto signed a deal in Nairobi with Haiti’s unelected, US-installed prime minister, Ariel Henry, to launch the latest imperialist military-security intervention in Haiti. This step became necessary after Kenya’s High Court had ruled the deployment of Kenyan forces to Haiti was unconstitutional, in part due to the lack of any reciprocal agreements between the two countries.

Just four days later, Henry—a right-wing figure who the US had hitherto staunchly supported—was effectively kidnapped by Washington. On his way back to Haiti, Henry’s plane was forced to land in the US territory of Puerto Rico, after he was confronted while in mid-air with a US State Department demand that he agree to “a new transitional government—and resign.” When Henry’s plane landed in San Juan, Puerto Rico’s capital, he was “immediately met by US Secret Service agents” and refused permission to deplane for hours, a *Miami Herald* exclusive on last Tuesday’s events further reported.

The US is pressing Henry to reach agreement with opposition leaders on an interim government led by a three-member “presidential council,” then step aside. Washington has long backed Henry in refusing opposition demands he “broaden” his government prior to any election. (The mandates of all the country’s elected officials long ago expired, and Henry was himself imposed as prime minister at the demand of the US,

French and Canadian-led “Core Group” of nations, following the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.) However, such is the state of the crisis now convulsing Haiti and the popular hatred for Henry, Washington has concluded his rule is no longer viable and wants to put into place a new political instrument to provide a “legal,” “Haitian” fig leaf for the MSS deployment, which it is simultaneously working to expedite.

Speaking of the Kenyan police deployment on Wednesday, the US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said Washington hoped “that action will take place quickly.”

Kenya’s role as an imperialist satrap

Kenya’s potential role in leading a US-Canadian financed and logistically supported MSS has been discussed for over eight months. Last July, Kenya’s Foreign Affairs Minister Alfred Mutua suddenly announced the mission, justifying it on racialist and “pan-Africanist” lines.

Mutua cynically stated, “At the request of Friends of Haiti Group of Nations, Kenya has accepted to positively consider leading a Multi-National Force to Haiti. ... Kenya stands with persons of African descent across the world, including those in the Caribbean, and aligns with the African Union’s diaspora policy and our own commitment to Pan Africanism, and in this case to ‘reclaiming of the Atlantic crossing’”

The truth is that Kenya’s police forces are being sent to Haiti as de facto mercenaries, acting in the role of jailers for a country which has become an open-air prison. The mission seeks to terrorise the Haitian population into submission to ensure the gang crisis does not precipitate a mass outflow of refugees to the US and Canada or serve to destabilise the Caribbean region.

Not coincidentally, Nairobi has already received advances for its services. Weeks after announcing it was “volunteering” to lead a mission to Haiti, the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted Kenya a new loan of more than \$941 million, as the country continues to grapple with a host of economic challenges including vast debt, the deterioration in living standards and a tumbling currency.

Washington and Ottawa have selected Kenya under conditions where they are waging war against Russia in Ukraine, supporting Israel’s genocide in Gaza and actively preparing for war with China, and amid mass opposition among the Haitian masses to an intervention led by either the US or Canada. Both have a long history of neo-colonial occupation and military intervention in Haiti, including as recently as 2004, when they deployed troops to oust its elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Tasking ruthless African and Caribbean police with pacifying the gangs and suppressing the Haitian population is, they calculate, a less costly option—in terms of both money and the lives of imperialist soldiers—than sending in US and Canadian troops.

Kenya has a long track record of acting as a satrap for US and European imperialism in maintaining their strategic grip over Eastern and Central Africa. In Somalia, where US drone strikes have killed over 1,000 Somalis in the past three years alone, Kenya has been intervening with thousands of troops since 2011 as the US proxy against the Al-Shabaab insurgency.

The US seeks to maintain control of the geostrategic Red Sea, where Washington and its allies are currently launching attacks against the Houthi militia in Yemen that have attempted to disrupt supplies to the Israeli military, in solidarity with the Palestinians. Kenya is the only Horn of Africa country to publicly endorse airstrikes on the impoverished nation.

This follows from Ruto's support for Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. After the October 7 Palestinian uprising, Ruto rapidly condemned Hamas and supported actions against "perpetrators, organizers, financiers, sponsors, supporters and enablers" of terrorism. Soon after, Kenya refused to endorse South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice and announced a plan to send 1,500 Kenyan casual workers to Israel to help make up for the acute labor shortage that has resulted from the exclusion of tens of thousands of day-labourers from the Occupied Territories and the departure of migrant workers from southeast Asia.

Kenya also signed onto a Western-backed East Africa "peacekeeping" force to the DR Congo's mineral-rich east, to stabilise the war-torn region so Western corporations can plunder the minerals in the region. The mission has ended in fiasco as various neighbouring countries back rival militia groups within the country.

Over the past year, top US security chiefs have been trooping to Nairobi. The latest was General Michael Langley, the head of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), in January. His visit came two weeks after CIA Director William Burns met Ruto at State House, as Washington was planning its attacks on Yemen. It followed the visit of US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in September 2023 to sign a new five-year Defense Cooperation Agreement between the two countries, with the stated purpose of supporting Kenya's capabilities for operational deployments.

Ruto regards Kenya's proxy services as a necessary demonstration of his government's commitment to the US and its global geostrategic aims. It underlines the Kenyan government's support for the US-led attempts to counter China's economic preeminence on the African continent. By serving as a proxy force for Washington, the Kenyan ruling class hopes to secure economic support. But its principal goal is securing imperialist political and military-security support, so as to steel itself in the face of mounting worker and farmer opposition to its imposition of class-war IMF austerity measures, including savage tax hikes, subsidy cuts on staple food and privatisations.

The bloody, repressive role of the Kenyan police

The plans to deploy Kenyan police to Haiti are themselves a devastating exposure of the claims of the imperialist powers to be concerned about the Haitian people. Despised by the masses, the Kenyan police act as a state sanctioned criminal gang, with the freedom to demand bribes, falsely accuse and imprison, and are regularly involved in extortion and extrajudicial killings. On a daily basis, the population is cash-milked dry by cops who demand "chai" (tea), a code-word for a bribe.

The Kenyan police has a long history of violence. After Kenya's independence from Britain in 1963, the new ruling class "Africanised" the police, but ensured it retained its repressive colonial character to suppress the masses. During the rule of Western-backed dictator President Daniel Arap Moi (1978-2002), Ruto's mentor, the police violently repressed workers and peasant strikes, murdered and tortured left-wing opponents, detained opposition figures without a trial, and enforced disappearances.

After Moi, police violence continued. Between 2002 and 2007, the Mungiki gang that operated protection rackets in slum areas, was violently suppressed by police forces. An estimated 8,000 mostly young people were killed in extrajudicial police murders. The brutality was such that decomposing bodies of as many as 500 victims were found in the outskirts of Nairobi. Then minister in charge of security, John Michuki, thuggishly stated that "if you don't toe the line, [Nairobi principal police officer] King'ori will give you a bullet."

In the 2007-2008 post-election violence, police were found to be complicit in mass killings, which claimed the lives of more than 1,200 people and displaced 600,000 from their homes, as police terrorised the population to enforce the election theft of then president candidate Mwai Kibaki. The majority of the killings happened in opposition strongholds where police shot dead hundreds of demonstrators.

Last year, Ruto sent the police to violently crack down on anti-austerity protests called by the opposition. Over 60 people were killed. To date, no police officer has been held accountable.

This is the track record of the police that the imperialist powers are sending to supposedly aid the Haitian people.

Amid mounting opposition within the Kenyan working class to sending police thugs to suppress their brothers and sisters in Haiti, the main opposition party, Azimio, is attempting to posture as an opponent of the Haiti intervention.

On Monday, Azimio spokesperson, Kalonzo Musyoka, said, "We will hold this government responsible in case our sons die in Haiti under the illegal deployment. We still oppose the move that was declared illegal by our courts."

Kalonzo's concerns for police deaths is not surprising given his track record working for Moi's police state. Under Moi's rule, he was the Foreign Affairs Minister (1993-1998), Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (1988-1992) and National Organising Secretary of KANU, the only legal party under Moi, as workers, students and left-wing opponents of the regime were killed and tortured.

As for Azimio's multi-millionaire leader, Raila Odinga, he is a darling of Washington and London, having maintained close relations with the US and other imperialist powers for decades. In 2011, as Kenya's prime minister, he supported Kenya's illegal invasion of Somalia. In the same year, he personally intervened to support France's soldiers in Ivory Coast to install Alassane Ouattara as president, after disputed November 2010 presidential elections.

Raila is an open defender of using Kenya to serve imperialist interests. In his autobiography, *The Flame of Freedom* (2013), he accuses the Kibaki government (2002-2013) of not seeing it necessary "to deploy our military forces to secure our borders against foreign incursion, nor to engage in regional, bilateral or international intervention and co-operation to help solve some of the problems bedeviling eastern Africa."

Similarly, the Communist Party of Kenya (CPK), whose leaders deserted the party and backed Ruto in 2022, are making empty appeals to the Kenyan regime. After the High Court declared the deployment of the police to Haiti as unconstitutional, the CPK posted a statement stating, "In light of this ruling, the CPK Majority urges the Kenyan government to respect the court's decision, abandon any plans for the unconstitutional deployment of police officers, and redirect efforts toward addressing domestic challenges faced by our citizens."

In opposition to the Stalinists' pathetic and reactionary appeals to the

Ruto regime and the Kenyan bourgeoisie to stop the deployment to Haiti, the *World Socialist Web Site* insists that this can only be achieved through the mobilisation of the international working class. This must be linked to the struggle to fuse the fight against imperialist war with the growing mass upsurge of working people around the world against capitalist austerity and the assault on their social and democratic rights. The way forward is to build a revolutionary Trotskyist vanguard in the working class, opposed to bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism, and fighting to bring the working class to power and build socialism.



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