

# US and Canada oust the prime minister they imposed on the Haitian people—A case study in imperialist gangsterism

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13 March 2024

Through bullying and what was a kidnapping in all but name, Washington and Ottawa have unceremoniously ousted Ariel Henry—the man they imposed on the Haitian people as their prime minister and continued to staunchly support for almost three years as he imposed savage IMF measures and refused to call presidential or parliamentary elections.

In what was the culmination of a week of imperialist intrigue, Henry announced his impending resignation in a video released late Monday night from the US territory of Puerto Rico, where he is currently stranded.

On Tuesday, March 5, Henry had tried to return to Haiti via the Dominican Republic from a diplomatic mission to Kenya, where he signed a bilateral agreement authorizing an imperialist-backed military-security intervention in the Caribbean island-nation to be led by the Kenyan police.

But the Dominican Republic, no doubt acting on Washington's orders, refused to let Henry's plane land. Once it was rerouted to Puerto Rico, the Haitian prime minister was confronted with a US State Department missive delivered in mid-air demanding that he resign. On Henry's arrival in San Juan he was met by US Secret Service agents and for hours prevented from deplaning.

Over the next few days, representatives of the US, Canada and France—the imperialist powers that head the UN's so-called Core Group of nations in regards to Haiti—made clear that they now view Henry as a liability who needs to be shunted from office.

Matters came to a head at a meeting Monday in Kingston, Jamaica, convened by Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders and attended by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken physically, as well as by various Haitian political leaders, and by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau virtually. Henry, who the US, Canada and France had installed in office in July 2021 following the bloody assassination of his predecessor, Jovenil Moïse, was demonstrably excluded from the proceedings. The deliberations, which continued for some eight hours, agreed to establish a “broad-based” seven-person unelected presidential “transitional council,” including representatives of Haiti's corrupt business and political elite, the Roman Catholic Church and “civil society.”

The purpose of this mechanism, over whose composition bitter wrangling has now erupted, is to provide a fig leaf of “popular” support for the latest imperialist-backed military-security

intervention in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

With Henry apparently balking at his sudden dismissal, Trudeau administered him a final tongue-lashing by phone. Not long thereafter, Henry issued his video declaration announcing, as had been demanded, that he would resign as prime minister just as soon as the “transitional council” is formed.

After the meeting, Blinken declared with unmatched cynicism, “Only the Haitian people can, only the Haitian people should determine their own future. Not anyone else.”

On the contrary, Henry's swift dismissal as Haiti's head of government proves yet again that Washington views Haiti's political leaders, whether elected or unelected, as valets to be dismissed at its convenience, and treats the impoverished Haitian people with criminal indifference and hostility.

This is imperialism showing its true colours. The “rules-based order” incessantly invoked by Washington, Canada and their European allies consists of the “rules” they dictate and choose to observe or break as they please.

Although on a decidedly smaller scale, the lawlessness on full display with Henry's ouster is of a piece with the outright criminality of Washington's unstinting support for Israel's genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza and reckless escalation of war with Russia irrespective of the threat of a nuclear conflagration. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained at the beginning of the year, “All the ‘red lines’ that demarcate civilization from barbarism are being effaced. The motto of capitalist governments is: ‘Nothing that is criminal is alien to us.’”

Haiti has suffered more than a century of repeated imperialist occupations, regime-change operations and outright plunder. US Marines were deployed to the country between 1915 and 1934 to ensure “stability.” They did so by making sure Haiti's debts to US banks were repaid and by brutally suppressing a widespread peasant insurgency.

The national army trained during the US occupation served as the central base of support for the three-decade-long Duvalier dictatorship, which terrorized the population with a regime of repression and torture from the late 1950s until the toppling of “Baby Doc” Duvalier by a mass popular uprising in 1986. Washington was a staunch backer of the dictatorship, which was viewed as an important Cold War ally in the Caribbean akin to that

of the Somoza family in Nicaragua. After Duvalier's overthrow, the US sought to maintain it under conditions of an insurrectionary movement among Haitian workers and the rural poor.

US and Canadian troops occupied Haiti for several years beginning in 1994 and intervened again in 2004 to remove the democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In ousting Aristide, Washington and Ottawa collaborated with far-right gangs with close ties to the old Duvalier regime and its fascistic security police, the Tonton Macoutes. After Haiti was struck by a horrific earthquake in 2010, which devastated the capital and claimed well over a quarter of a million lives, the imperialists once again deployed troops to the island nation. Behind pledges of "humanitarian aid," they continued their push for "neo-liberal" economic restructuring to wring more lucre from the Haitian people. In 2015/16, the Obama administration and Ottawa, under the newly-elected Trudeau Liberal government, intervened to manipulate the election process to ensure that Moïse, the chosen successor of Michel Martelly, a far-right figure with close ties to the old Duvalier-ist wing of the bourgeoisie, came out on top.

It is this imperialist subjugation and plunder, facilitated by all factions of the corrupt and cowardly Haitian bourgeoisie, that has produced the social calamity now engulfing Haiti. More than half of the country's 11 million people are dependent on food aid. Health care and other basic social services are non-existent. With over 80 percent of Port-au-Prince under the control of heavily armed gangs, commerce and trade are at a virtual standstill.

Biden, Blinken, Trudeau and their advisers are not organizing another occupation of Haiti by foreign security forces because they are moved by such scenes of human misery. They have proven over the past six months that they are more than prepared to supply the weaponry and political cover for Israel to massacre defenceless men, women and children indiscriminately.

If they are anxious to restore bourgeois "law and order" in Haiti it is because they fear that the worsening humanitarian crisis in a country just 700 miles from Miami could result in a flood of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of refugees, into North America's twin imperialist powers and during a US election year. They also fear the crisis in Haiti could destabilize the Caribbean region. Military forces in the Dominican Republic are working with vigilantes to violently expel Haitians seeking refuge in the Dominican side of the island of Hispaniola.

An additional concern is the loss to US global "prestige" produced by the collapse of a country in the Caribbean, which Washington and Ottawa have long considered their "backyard" and exploited brutally for well over a century.

Biden and Trudeau are contracting out to Kenya and several other African and CARICOM countries the task of imposing "order" in a country marked by the starkest social inequality, rather than deploying US and Canadian troops directly to suppress the Haitian masses. This is not only because they are preoccupied with their war against Russia and preparations for war against Iran and China. They know there is seething hatred for both US and Canadian imperialism among the Haitian people, which could turn any direct intervention into a bloody debacle.

That opposition however must be led by the working class in

opposition to all factions of the Haitian ruling class and its big business and petty bourgeois political representatives.

The pseudo-left in North America as well as the US Democratic Party's Congressional Black Caucus continue to promote Aristide and the forces around his Parti Fanmi Lavalas as a progressive opposition to imperialism and the most rapacious sections of the Haitian bourgeoisie. In fact, Aristide, who gained widespread support by delivering fiery speeches denouncing inequality and political repression while still a priest, was the instrument utilised by imperialism to smother the mass movement that overthrew the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 and continued in the face of the military coup that ousted his first government in 1991 just seven months after he swept the presidential polls.

Once expelled from office, Aristide made no appeal to the Haitian masses to resist, nor to the international working class. Instead, he directed the Haitian masses, including those living in the diaspora, to appeal for intervention by the imperialist powers, that is, those principally responsible for suppressing the democratic and social aspirations of the Haitian people.

After Aristide had grovelled before Washington for several years and agreed to implement IMF austerity and limit his presidency to the remaining year and a half in his five-year term, US President Bill Clinton ordered the Marines to place him back in power in Port-au-Prince.

His second administration (2001-2003) was even more pathetic, with his government serving as a toady of the IMF. When he was kidnapped by the US military and expelled from the country, there was little to any reaction in the Bidonvilles (the poorest slums) that once had been the bastions of his electoral support.

On Tuesday, representatives of the Parti Famni Lavalas were once again working with Washington and Ottawa to cobble together a new right-wing, pro-imperialist government.

No section of the Haitian bourgeoisie is capable of waging a genuine struggle to secure the democratic and social interests of the long-suffering Haitian masses. Haiti's misery can only be ended through the adoption by the working class throughout the region of the program of Permanent Revolution in alliance with their class brothers and sisters in the imperialist centres.



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