

Haiti's unelected prime minister ousted amid surging gang and state violence, increasing social misery

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Haiti's interim prime minister was ousted last week by the Transitional Council—the government “oversight mechanism” that the US, Canada and various factions of the country's bourgeois elite put together earlier this year to provide a fig leaf of “popular” legitimacy for the latest imperialist-sponsored military intervention in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

The Council's sacking of Garry Conille came amid rampant gang and state violence and ever widening social misery.

Conille was sworn in as head of Haiti's government last June just weeks before the international police-military “stabilization” force organized, financed and, to a large degree armed, by Washington, Ottawa and their allies began to deploy in Port-au-Prince, the country's capital.

Six months on, the Kenyan-led “stabilization force” has failed to make any discernible progress in disarming the gangs that have overrun some 60 percent of Port-au-Prince and much of the country over the past year.

In a clear sign that the situation on the ground is spiralling out of control, the US Federal Aviation Administration has instituted a temporary ban on flights to Haiti, after gangs opened fire on commercial airlines on Monday, November 11. At least three planes were targeted by gunfire from below, including a Spirit Airlines plane that was about to land in Port-au-Prince, and departing JetBlue and American Airlines jets. A Spirit flight attendant was injured in the attack.

The FAA decision also temporarily grounded United Nations humanitarian flights, restricting much needed supplies. UN flights were only permitted to resume on Wednesday, November 20.

The same day as the attack on Spirit Airlines also saw a widely reported attack by law enforcement officers and aligned vigilantes on Doctors Without Borders' (MSF) operations in Port-au-Prince. Citing this incident, as well as a “series of threats” by local police, MSF announced the suspension of its activities in Haiti on Tuesday, further compounding Haiti's isolation and privation from urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

According to the MSF, members of a vigilante group and law enforcement officers stopped their ambulance, which was transporting three young people with gunshot wounds. Police attempted to arrest the patients and when MSF personnel objected they escorted the ambulance to a public hospital, where law enforcement officers and vigilantes surrounded the vehicle, slashed its tires, and tear-gassed MSF staff. At least two of the wounded patients were then summarily executed.

The gruesome attack on defenceless patients and MSF ambulance personnel by the Haitian police highlights once more that the very forces supposed to fight the gangs are themselves the source of like violence and criminality.

Haiti's government and state are mired in corruption and violence, widely unpopular, and have been operating outside constitutional bounds, without an elected parliament and president, since 2020. The Transitional Council is entirely subordinated to the interests of the North American and European imperialist powers and torn by bitter factional conflicts between the political representatives of rival capitalist cliques. The gangs have been able to flourish and wield effective control over much of the Haitian-half of the island of Hispaniola because they enjoy the patronage of, and are tied to leading elements within Haiti's ruling class and its state.

In a continuation of the rapid succession of corrupt and unelected leaders installed at the behest of Washington and Ottawa, the Transitional Council fired interim Prime Minister Garry Conille, whose family had close ties to the US-backed three-decade long “Papa and Baby Doc” Duvalier dictatorship, on Nov 10. In his place it has named Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, a businessman and former president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who ran for the Senate in 2015. Not unlike the numerous pretenders to Haiti's leadership before him, Fils-Aimé has promised to work towards the holding of elections, which have not taken place in Haiti since 2016. At that time, the Obama administration and the Trudeau government intervened and manipulated the process to ensure the election of Jovenel Moïse, the protégé of the outgoing right-wing president, Michel Martelly.

The Transitional Council's ouster of Conille came after it had attempted to change the heads of several ministries in defiance of his advice. The governmental reshuffling is occurring only six months after Conille replaced his disgraced predecessor, Ariel Henry, whom the US coerced into stepping down, without even the pretense of legal or democratic processes, by preventing his return to Haiti. Conille, for his part, has denounced his own dismissal as “tainted by illegality.”

The Council, established in April to restore “democratic order,” is constantly facing internecine conflicts and corruption accusations, as competing sections of Haiti's bourgeoisie vie for the relatively little wealth and power accorded to them by their imperialist sponsors.

The social and political crisis roiling Haiti is among the most severe anywhere, and the direct consequence of brutal imperialist oppression, including more than a century of US military interventions and regime change operations dating back to the 1915-34 occupation of the country by US Marines.

The country has never recovered from the IMF restructuring programs imposed over the last three decades and a devastating 2010 earthquake.

Despite a crying need for humanitarian aid, international “assistance” over the past year has been primarily focused on providing troops and equipment to establish “order” and buttress the ability of the barely functioning state to exercise a monopoly on organized violence.

Much of the population—and especially the more than 700,000 people who have been internally displaced—lack access to sufficient food and other necessities.

None of this concerns the ruling classes of the United States, France, or Canada.

In a rare display of honesty caught on video, French President Emmanuel Macron summed up what imperialist leaders really think about the Haitian people. Recorded on the margins of the G20 this week, the video shows Macron arguing with a bystander in public, as he denounces the Transitional Council’s move to replace Conille. After underlining that he had supported Conille, Macron describes the latter’s Haitian opponents as “total morons,” and goes on to blame the Haitian population itself for the crisis in which their country is mired: “Quite frankly, it was the Haitians who killed Haiti.”

Macron’s remarks are an outrageous and brazen lie coming from the president of the state which is one of the prime culprits in the plunder and oppression of the Haitian people. Apart from the arrogance, condescension, and contempt for its subjects typically exhibited by imperialist leaders, Macron’s unhinged remarks reveal something else: A growing impatience and anxiety, bound up with the potential consequences of continued and worsening political instability in Haiti, and the Caribbean region more broadly.

The past few months have already seen mass unrest over the cost of living in the French territories of Guadeloupe and the nearby island of Martinique. In Guadeloupe, striking workers who seized control of the territory’s power station caused days of power outages. This has been met with repressive measures by French authorities, including days-long curfews. The instability within Haiti, as well as the mass exodus of its population, is seen as potential fuel to the fire of rapidly developing class struggles, not just in the Caribbean, but also in North America.

In September this year, the UN Security Council reauthorized the present “international security force” deployment to Haiti. Currently it is led by a few hundred Kenyan Special Forces police, who are notorious for the brutality they have employed in repressing protests in Nairobi. While they have been deployed since this summer, they have completely failed to curb the gang violence, or for that matter the terroristic violence carried out by the Haitian police, whose operations they are mandated to assist.

According to a UN report published last month, there was a surge in killings and police executions in Haiti between July and September 2024. During that period, more than 1,740 people were killed or injured, a nearly 30% increase from the previous trimester. This included at least 106 extrajudicial killings that were carried out by law enforcement officials. Among those summarily executed were six children as young as 10 years old accused of collaborating with gangs.

The decision of the North American imperialist powers to delegate the task of imposing “order” in Haiti to Kenya and other African and CARICOM nations, rather than deploying their own forces, partly reflects the fact that the United States and Canada have prioritized their military resources for arming Ukraine and preparing for direct

military confrontation with Russia and China.

They are also acutely aware of the deep-seated hostility of the Haitian population toward imperialism and fear the impact at home of both having to suppress anti-imperialist protests, as well as being caught in a costly military conflict with well-armed gangs.

In regard to the crisis now consuming Haiti, the principal concern of US and Canadian imperialism is to prevent it further destabilizing the Caribbean region, which they view as their “backyard,” and provoking an exodus of impoverished refugees.

Those Haitians attempting to flee what increasingly resembles a nightmarish open air prison are met with political persecution and social hardship wherever they attempt to seek refuge, from the Dominican Republic to overseas in Canada or the United States.

In the United States, President-elect Donald Trump placed incitement against immigrants, and Haitian refugees in particular, at the centre of his campaign. Fanning the flames of racism and xenophobia, Trump and his running mate, J.D. Vance, assisted among others by the fascist billionaire Elon Musk and his ownership of Twitter, scurrilously denounced Haitian refugees in Springfield, Ohio, for hunting and eating Americans’ pet cats and dogs.

Tens of thousands of Haitians are currently allowed to live and work in the United States under the Temporary Protected Status program. Many were granted this status in the wake of the devastating 2010 earthquake, which killed hundreds of thousands, and displaced millions.

Trump is expected to revoke this temporary legal status and implement measures and deport all these Haitian refugees from the very first days of his presidency, as part of his plans to mount a police-military witch hunt against so-called “illegal” immigrants.

The Democratic Party not only hasn’t done anything to counter this anti-immigrant campaign, the Biden-Harris administration has implemented its own anti-immigrant policies, including increased deportations and border closures. The same goes for the Canadian Liberal government of Justin Trudeau. It recently announced a drastic tightening of immigration restrictions, entirely adapting and lending credibility to the Canadian version of the same anti-immigrant discourse promoted south of the border. Moreover, Immigration Minister Marc Miller has vowed that Canada will not provide an “open door” to those under threat of expulsion by Trump from the US and will work closely with his administration to provide border “security.”



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