Salvadoran troops launch offensive in Haiti as warnings of civilian bloodbath mount

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In a long post on X on Tuesday, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele told Haitians that his troops would "help you retake the country from the hands of the traitors who betray the legacy of [Jean-Jacques] Dessalines, and finally, Haiti will be free." The traitors who "plunged Haiti into several generations of suffering and misery," he wrote, still exist.

If Bukele resembles any figure from the Haitian Revolution, it is not Dessalines, who led the only successful slave revolution in history, but Gen. Charles Leclerc. In 1802 Leclerc, Napoleon's brother-in-law landed with some 30,000 troops, carrying a proclamation that told the population "you are all free and all equal before God and the Republic." His real mission was to reimpose French rule, with slavery restored in Guadeloupe that same year.

Bukele has deployed more than 2,000 soldiers to Haiti with the backing of US imperialism, the same power that occupied the country from 1915 to 1934. He is helping Washington retake control of the country so that American corporations can step up the exploitation of Haitian workers, who sew clothing for the US market for a few dollars a day.

The Salvadoran deployment is the spearhead of Operation Condor 2.0: the use of the region's most repressive regimes as proxies to turn the hemisphere into a policed platform for US imperialism. The first Operation Condor was a secret, transnational network of political repression and state terrorism created in the 1970s by US-backed military dictatorships of South America. Today it operates publicly.

On November 2, as Salvadoran troops launched their first major offensive in the Cul-de-Sac plain, hundreds marched in Canaan behind a banner reading "Kanarandebou" ("Canaan Standing"). Canaan is a sprawling settlement north of Port-au-Prince, built by survivors of the 2010 earthquake and now home to as many as 350,000 people. Signs read "The people of Plain demand justice for their children who die from gunshots and drones." Speakers called the operation a planned "genocide" and insisted there are "no gunshots, rapes or kidnappings in Canaan."

The march must be treated with caution. Canaan is the stronghold of Jeff "Kanaran" Larose, the leader of the Canaan gang and a member of the Viv Ansanm coalition. Such gangs are armed instruments of rival factions of the Haitian bourgeoisie. In July 2025 the UN placed him on its sanctions list, citing kidnapping, rape and murder.

Local outlets reported that Viv Ansanm threatened residents of the plain with death to force them into the streets against the Salvadoran deployment. Viv Ansanm's leader, Jimmy Chérizier, has long dressed up the gangs' operations in denunciations of the "Haitian and American oligarchs."

The fears the march voiced are well founded nonetheless, and Haitian workers and youth do not need to be coerced to oppose foreign troops. Based on their experience, they know foreign troops "fighting gangs" mean dead civilians, and a force operating outside even the formal restraints of a UN mandate means a greater risk. The UN "stabilization" mission of 2004 to 2017 carried out raids in Cité Soleil that killed civilians and introduced cholera that killed roughly 10,000 people.

The Monday offensive, carried out by Salvadoran troops in about a dozen armored vehicles in the plain northeast of the capital, targeted the Chen Mechan and 400 Mawozo gangs, which are blamed for the October 18 disappearance of four Salvadoran aviation technicians. Haitian press reports cited by EFE, in the absence of an official toll, said at least a dozen gang members were killed.

On Tuesday, police found the burned truck the technicians had been using. Wilson Joseph, the leader of 400 Mawozo, told the Associated Press that the men were

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killed in the original attack. He also wrote to UN Secretary-General António Guterres warning that Bukele's "vengeful remarks… and threats" would bring "a logic of reprisals, of which the Haitian people would be the first victims."

The UN has distanced itself from the operation. Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said only about 200 of the Salvadorans fall under the UN-authorized Gang Suppression Force (GSF), and he called the rest "a bilateral matter." According to the *Miami Herald*, they report to a Salvadoran commander rather than to the GSF's Mongolian force commander. They arrived without the human rights training required under UN rules and before any signed agreement with Haiti.

Washington has hired for the job a regime that holds the highest incarceration rate in the world and has seen hundreds of deaths in custody and the torture of deportees sent to its prisons by the Trump administration. In 2020 Bukele marched soldiers into the Legislative Assembly to force through a loan for his security forces.

Trump reportedly told Bukele to "do what you have to do." The first Salvadoran reinforcements landed in Port-au-Prince aboard a US military C-130 that, according to the *Miami Herald*, was "provided by the Pentagon at the request of the U.S. State Department." A Colombian Air Force Hercules followed, and the Salvadoran combat helicopters entered Haiti from a Dominican army base on the border. All three governments belong to the US-led Coalition of the Americas Against Cartels, which met in Santo Domingo days before the surge. Canada, the co-sponsor with Washington of every recent Haitian regime, has said nothing publicly.

Washington's prime minister

Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé insisted on Tuesday that "The international forces did not come to replace the State. They came to support it." The Haitian state in question is a regime installed and kept in place by Washington.

Fils-Aimé is a businessman and former director of the Banque de l'Union Haïtienne. He presided over the Chamber of Commerce from 2011 to 2016 under Michel Martelly, the US-installed president whom Washington later sanctioned for drug trafficking, and he ran for the Senate in 2015. In November 2024 he was named prime minister, with the backing of the private sector, by the Transitional Presidential Council that the US and Canada had assembled. He replaced Garry Conille, whose family had close ties to the Duvalier dictatorship.

When five of the council's seven voting members moved to fire him on January 22 of this year, the State Department declared his retention "integral" to the fight against the gangs, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio phoned to reaffirm US support. Three days later Washington announced it was revoking the visas of two council members for "supporting gangs."

On February 7 the council's mandate ended and power passed to Fils-Aimé alone. Ottawa declared that "Canada looks to Prime Minister Fils-Aimé."

His office also oversees the drone task force run by Erik Prince's mercenary company Vectus Global, whose strikes killed 1,243 people between March 2025 and January 2026, according to Human Rights Watch.

A bloodbath in preparation

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported that 30 people, including women and children, were wounded by gunfire and drone explosions in the eight days after October 18. "We fear that this armed conflict will claim even more victims, and displace even more people in the coming days, particularly with the arrival of additional international security forces," said Davina Hayles, the head of MSF's mission in Haiti.

The danger extends to the Salvadoran soldiers themselves. Romain Le Cour Grandmaison of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime notes that Haiti's armed groups "have taken on a profile closer to that of militias," with territories spanning hundreds of kilometers and "military-grade weapons and munitions."

Bukele dismissed such warnings with the promise that "when God grants us victory," his critics would change their tune. He has denounced a Haitian NGO that reported civilian deaths from foreign bombs as "lobbying firms for criminals and cartels."

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