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IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (Author)

Haiti: Security situation and criminality, including major criminal groups and how they are organized, activities and areas of influence, including outside Port-au-Prince (August 2022–January 2023) [HTI201332.FE]

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1. Security Situation and Criminality

1.1 Insecurity

Sources indicate that insecurity has worsened in Haiti [in 2022] (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12; BAI & IJDH 2022-12, 1, 2). Some speak of "unprecedented" (*The Guardian* 2023-01-12) or [GI-TOC English version] "major" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 3) levels of violence or insecurity. Sources report that several countries, including Canada, Mexico and Spain, closed their embassies in Haiti in September 2022 due to the insecurity (AFP 2022-09-15; HaïtiLibre 2022-09-15). On 21 December 2022, the Deputy Secretary General of the UN told the Security Council that Haiti was [UN English version] "in a deepening crisis of unprecedented scale and complexity" and stressed that "gang violence has paralysed the country, obstructed the freedom of movement of people, goods and humanitarian aid," in addition to noting that "this violence has fuelled the resurgence of cholera, increased food insecurity to unimaginable levels, displaced 155,000 people and disrupted the education of thousands of children" (UN 2022-12-21). According to several sources, this insecurity affects the lives of many Haitians even in their most basic daily lives, notably in Port-au-Prince (Al Jazeera 2023-01-02; BBC 2022-12-11; IJDH & BAI 2022-12, 1). Sources report injuries by stray bullets (BBC 2022-12-11; France 24 2022-11-11). Orla Guerin, a BBC senior international correspondent, visited Haiti and reports the following about the capital:

[BBC English version]

Those who live here carry a mental map, dividing this teeming city into green, yellow, and red zones. Green means gang free, yellow can be safe today and deadly tomorrow, and red is a no-go area. The green zone is shrinking as heavily armed gangs tighten their grip. (BBC 2022-12-11)

1.1.1 Displaced Persons

According to a report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of displaced persons in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, which includes Port-au-Prince, Delmas, Croix-des-Bouquets, Cité Soleil, Carrefour, Pétion Ville and Tabarre, in November 2022 stood at 155,166, which was 77 percent more than in August 2022; in 97 percent of cases, the reason for displacement was urban violence (UN 2022-12-28). Sources state that these people must [[translation] "very often" (RNDDH 2023-01-12)] find shelter in makeshift sites or public spaces (RNDDH 2023-01-12; UN 2022-10-13, para. 39), where they do not receive assistance from the authorities (RNDDH 2023-01-12).

1.2 Territory

According to sources, violence and insecurity are most prevalent in Port-au-Prince (RNDDH 2023-01-12; HRW 2023-01-12) or throughout Ouest Department (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a). But sources report that violence and insecurity now extend beyond the national capital region (RNDDH 2023-01-12; BAI & IJDH 2022-12, 2; UN 2022-10-13, para. 19). Some state that it is throughout the whole country (Défenseurs plus 2023-10-13a; Crisis Group 2022-12-14, 1; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 12).

Among the regions where gangs are now more active, sources refer to Artibonite Department (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12; UN 2022-10-13, para. 19, 38). Others indicate Nord Department (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a) or the city of Cap-Haïtien in the north (The New Humanitarian 2022-11-24). Défenseurs plus, a non-profit collective defending human rights in Haiti [Défenseurs plus English version] "to achieve a true democratic rule of law" (Défenseurs plus n.d.), added the southern departments (2023-01-13b), particularly the cities of Jacmel and Les Cayes, which are [translation] "starting to have serious problems of insecurity" (2023-01-13a), and the Nord-Ouest Department (2022-11-24). The same source reported, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, that Centre Department is less affected, but that it is difficult to get there because gangs are active along the roads leading to it (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a). A report [1] published by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), an independent international civil society organization seeking strategies to counter organized crime (GI-TOC n.d.), states that gangs are present in 63 communes [out of 146] of the country, including [GI-TOC English version] "vulnerable communities in urban, peri-urban and rural areas" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 12).

1.2.1 Traffic Obstruction

Sources report that the activities of criminal gangs obstruct traffic on roads between Port-au-Prince and other parts of Haiti (RNDDH 2023-01-12; Crisis Group 2022-12-14, 2; BBC 2022-12-11). Along these routes, gangs may hijack freight trucks, demand sums of money to allow them to pass through, kidnap people and rape or kill them (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12). Défenseurs plus indicates that national routes 1 [going from Port-au-Prince to the north] and 2 [from Port-au-Prince to the southwest] were affected by gang activity (2023-01-13a). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the same source added that the road leading to the central plateau passes through the territory of 400 Mawozo and the Canaan gang; the road that leads to the north crosses G9 and Canaan gang territory; the road that goes south cuts through the 5 Seconds (5 secondes) and Tilapli [Ti Lapli] gang territory; and the road that goes to the Dominican Republic crosses 400 Mawozo and Vitelòm [Vitelhomme, Vitel'Homme] gang territory (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13b). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the National Human Rights Defense Network (Réseau national de défense des droits humains, RNDDH), a Haitian NGO engaged in human rights education and monitoring human rights violations (RNDDH n.d.), states the following:

[translation]

- [A road south of Port-au-Prince, in Martissant,] is occupied by three armed groups that have been in conflict since June 2021. On several occasions, freight trucks have been seized, people have been abducted and/or killed and women raped right in the street. People who take this route are at risk of being killed, injured, raped or abducted. In addition, drivers are obliged to pay the criminals for permission to travel on the road.
- East of Port-au-Prince, national route #8 is controlled by the 400 Mawozo gang, which kidnaps, kills and demands money from users of this stretch of road.
- North of the capital, specifically in Canaan and Cité Soleil, armed groups are committing all kinds of abuses, preventing circulation in this area.
- Near Morne-à-Cabris, on the national route, a group of criminals is still occupying the road.
- [Lastly,] roads that provide access to Torcelle and Laboule 12 are occupied by criminals. (RNDDH 2023-01-12)

2. Criminality

2.1 Gang Violence

Sources report [translation] "massacres" perpetrated by gangs in the last six months [of 2022] (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12).

At the beginning of July 2022, in Cité Soleil, sources report the following situation:

- 221 (UN 2022-10-13, para. 16) or [translation] "over" 300 persons were killed (RNDDH 2022-08-16, para. 8);
- [UN English version] "[a]t least" 52 or 57 women and girls were raped, some of them repeatedly (RNDDH 2022-08-16, para. 8; UN 2022-10-13, para. 16);
- 183 people were injured (UN 2022-10-13, para. 16);
- [UN English version] "[a]bout" 3,000 people fled their homes and "at least" 140 homes were destroyed or burned down (UN 2022-07-25).

According to the RNDDH, the violence was due to clashes between G9 and G-Pep (2022-08-16, para. 4).

Sources also report the following incidents:

- The murder, on 20 August 2022, of two young girls and their mother, killed and then burned in Croix-des-Bouquets (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; UN 2022-10-13, para. 20; RNDDH 2023-01-12) by 400 Mawozo (RNDDH 2023-01-12).
- In October 2022, the village of Noailles in Croix-des-Bouquets was attacked by the Vitelòm gang and 400 Mawozo; during the clashes, [translation] "at least" 5 (RNDDH 2023-01-12) or "about 15" people (AlterPresse 2022-10-20) were killed, approximately 10 houses were burned and ["a large number" of (AlterPresse 2022-10-20)] residents had to flee (RNDDH 2023-01-12; AlterPresse 2022-10-20).
- On 9 November 2022, clashes between the Jean Denis and Savien gangs killed approximately 15 people (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a).
- Source-Matelas, in the commune of Cabaret, was assaulted by gangs in late November 2022 and, during this attack, [70 (RNDDH 2023-01-12) or "about 20" (AlterPresse 2022-12-02)] people lost

their lives, dozens of houses were destroyed (RNDDH 2023-01-12; AlterPresse 2022-12-02) and 34 women and girls were raped (RNDDH 2023-01-12).

Défenseurs plus claims to have recorded 1,800 cases of killings during 2022 (2023-01-13a). At the meeting of the UN Security Council on 24 January 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of UN Integrated Office in Haiti (Bureau intégré des Nations Unies en Haïti, BINUH) noted an average of four murders per day in 2022 due to [UN English version] "gang-related" violence, which represents an increase of 33 percent over 2021 (UN 2023-01-24a). Sources dating from 2022 and 2023 report, among other things, killings by snipers (UN 2023-01-24b; Haiti Progress 2022-09-14; HaïtiLibre 2022-09-13).

The BINUH and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) indicated, in an October 2022 report on sexual violence in Port-au-Prince, that sexual violence, including rape, is used by gangs as a [UN English version] "weapon" to instill fear, to expand their areas of influence and to subjugate the population during attacks, kidnappings or when a person crosses the frontlines (UN 2022-10, para. 3, 6). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that [HRW English version] "[f]rom January through March 2022, BINUH registered an average of 98 victims of sexual violence per month in gang-controlled areas of Port-au-Prince," adding that "the real number is very likely much higher, as sexual violence remains chronically underreported" (2023-01-12). Numerous cases of collective rape have been reported (BBC 2022-12-11; Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a). Following the Cité Soleil massacre, the RNDDH published a detailed report documenting 52 incidents of collective rape of women and girls (2022-08-16, para. 8). During this massacre, according to BINUH, "[n]o fewer than 57 women and girls were raped in their homes, on their way to work, while running household errands or as they tried to flee the area. In some cases, these acts of sexual violence occurred in front of the victims' children and partners" (UN 2022-10-13, para. 42). In a report on rape used as a weapon of war by gangs in Haiti, the New Humanitarian reports that a [UNICEF specialist in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (UN 2022-03-18)] stated the following: "Speaking about 10 cases means that there are 1,000 unreported; speaking about 100 means that there are 10,000" (2022-11-14).

According to sources, kidnappings are common in Haiti (RNDDH 2023-01-12; BBC 2022-12-11). On 24 January 2023, BINUH reported 1,359 in 2022, double that of the previous year (UN 2023-01-24a). Défenseurs plus counted more than 700 kidnappings in the last six months of 2022 (2023-01-13a). A report by the International Bureau of Lawyers (Bureau des avocats internationaux, BAI) and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) [2] indicates, with reference to an article in *Le Nouvelliste* on the massacre in Cité Soleil, that [translation] "according to human rights defenders on the ground, the actual number is much higher than reported, because gangs threaten to kill abducted persons if their families contact the police" (BAI & IJDH 2022-12, 3). BINUH and OHCHR similarly report that most cases are unreported (UN 2022-10, para. 43).

Kidnappings against ransom payment are a critical source of revenue for gangs (BBC 2022-12-11; UN 2022-10, para. 43). These ransoms [BBC English version] "can run from [US]\$200 ... to \$1 [million]," according to the BBC correspondent, who explains that "most victims come back alive – if the ransom is paid – but they are made to suffer" (BBC 2022-12-11). The same source cites a member of a human rights organization in Haiti who explains that [BBC English version] "[m]en are beaten and burned with materials like melted plastic," and that "[w]omen and girls are subject to gang rape. This situation spurs relatives to find money to pay the ransom. Sometimes kidnappers call the relatives so they can hear the rape being carried out on the phone" (BBC 2022-12-11). According to Défenseurs plus, [translation] "[n]owadays kidnappings happen so often that they barely make the news" (2023-01-13a). The BBC correspondent states the following: [BBC English version] "They set the clock here. Morning

rush hour – between 06:00 and 09:00 – is peak kidnapping time. Many are snatched from the streets on their way to work. Others are targeted at evening rush hour – 15:00 to 18:00" (2022-12-11).

Local sources report that anyone who crosses paths with gangs are targeted (RNDDH 2023-01-12) or even that [translation] "a person is likely to be kidnapped anywhere in the territory" but that kidnappings occur primarily in Ouest Department (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a).

Sources also indicate that gangs commit theft and hijack freight trucks (*Le Nouvelliste* 2022-12-27; Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12) in addition to committing robbery (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12). According to the RNDDH, they tax or [translation] "ransom" companies located in their territory and demand rights of way on the roads that pass through it, including from public transport drivers (2023-01-12).

2.2 People Targeted

Sources report that violence by criminal gangs is now threatening everyone in Haiti (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13b; BAI & IJDH 2022-12-10, 2; UN 2022-10, para. 43). According to the RNDDH,

[translation]

[n]owadays, no one is immune to criminal acts by gangs. All people in the Haitian territory are subject to all kinds of abuses. Whatever your social rank, status, economic level, political or religious affiliation, you are a potential prey for criminals. (2023-01-12)

Sources report that civilians can now be considered the first victims of gangs (Défenseurs plus 2022-11-24; France 24 2022-11-11). BINUH indicates in October 2022 that [UN English version] "local populations are no longer collateral victims of armed clashes but are directly targeted by gangs" (UN 2022-10-13, para. 38).

Nevertheless, some profiles of individuals emerge as being more often the subject of gang violence:

- women and girls, especially when it comes to sexual violence, [sometimes children (Défenseurs plus 2022-11-24; The New Humanitarian 2022-11-14)] and the elderly, without excluding men and boys from being victims (UN 2022-10, para. 5);
- people whose sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) do not conform to societal norms, also suffer violence (HRW 2023-01-12), including sexual violence (UN 2022-10, para. 38);
- children and adolescents, who are coerced into joining gangs (RNDDH 2023-01-12; UN 2022-10-13, para. 44);
- journalists (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13b), who are often attacked (HRW 2023-01-12; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 13);
- human rights defenders (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13b; HRW 2023-01-12);
- police officers, who are the target of attacks (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13b; BBC 2022-08-10);
- health care workers, who are the target of kidnappings (UN 2022-10, para. 10, 43; IMEDIA 2022-10-08; MSF 2022-05-23);
- family members of the police officers (HaïtiLibre 2022-09-29);
- family members of children who refuse to join a gang (UN 2022-10-13, para. 44).

3. Criminal Groups

3.1. Overview

Sources indicate that the number of gangs in Haiti is over 150 (France 24 2022-11-11; InSight Crime 2022-07-18) or approximately 200 (BBC 2022-12-11; The New Humanitarian 2022-11-14). About a hundred gangs operate in Port-au-Prince (*The Guardian* 2023-01-12; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 6).

Sources report that the gangs clash to control territory (HRW 2023-01-12; *The Guardian* 2023-01-12; Défenseurs plus 2022-11-24; DW 2022-08-10). According to the report published by GI-TOC, [GI-TOC English version] "[i]n the past, gangs tended to remain within their neighbourhood limits. However, throughout the country ... , violent confrontations between rival gangs are becoming increasingly frequent, with serious consequences for the civilian population" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 13).

3.2 Major Criminal Gangs and Their Territories

When asked about the most powerful gangs in Haiti today, local sources provided the following information:

- RNDDH identified G9 an fanmi e Alye (G9), Baz 5 segonn/Village de Dieu [5 Seconds], 400 Mawozo, Baz Timakak [Ti Makak], Baz Chen Mechan [Chen Mechan], Gran Ravin [Tilapli], Nan Brooklyn, Baz Pilate, Tibwa [Ti Bwa] and Vitelòm (2023-01-12);
- Défenseurs plus cited G9, 5 Seconds, 400 Mawozo, Ti Makak, Aji Vit, Gran grif, Krache Dife, Kris La, Tilapli and Torcel (2023-01-13a).

Sources dating from 2022 and 2023 report two major competing gang coalitions in Haiti, the rival G9 and G-Pep alliances (RNDDH 2023-01-12; BBC 2022-07-15; Crisis Group 2022-12-09). According to Insight Crime, a media organization and think tank on organized crime in the Americas (Insight Crime n.d.), G9 is connected to the political party Parti haïtien Tèt Kale (PHTK) and G-Pep is supported by the PHTK's political opponents (2022-07-21). For more information on links between gangs and politicians, see Response to Information Request HTI201064 of July 2022. On a map of the main gang territories of Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas, prepared by BBC's research service and accompanying Orla Guerin's December 2022 article, the territory is divided between the G-Pep coalition, the G9 coalition, and the other groups (BBC 2022-12-11). Among the main Haitian gangs, the BAI and the IJDH also name 400 Mawozo and Chen Mechan (2022-12, 2). On a map of the main areas of Port-au-Prince controlled by gangs, Les Observateurs de France 24, in a program for which journalists in France contacted [translation] "dozens of Haitians, living in the country and abroad," reports on "five of them, among the most powerful": G9, G-Pep, 400 Mawozo, Chen Mechan and 5 Seconds (France 24 2022-11-11).

The articles by France 24 and the BBC, as well as the report published by the GI-TOC, include maps of the Port-au-Prince region and gangs controlling these territories (BBC 2022-12-11; France 24 2022-11-11; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 17).

3.2.1 G9 [G9 an fanmi/G9 an fanmi e alye/G9 and Family and Allies (G9 en famille et alliés)]

G9, according to InSight Crime, was composed in July 2022 of nine "powerful" gangs from Port-au-Prince: Belekou, Nan Boston, Baz Nan Chabon, Delmas, Baz Krache Dife, Baz Pilate, Simon Pelé, Nan Ti

Bwa, and Waf Jérémie (2022-07-18). In January 2023, the RNDDH states that the Lasaline and Chen Mehan gangs were also part of it (2023-01-12). According to the report published by the GI-TOC, G9 has continued to [GI-TOC English version] "absorb othe[r]" gangs (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 13).

Jimmy Cherizier [Cherisier, Cerisier, Cerizier], alias Barbecue [BBQ], is the leader of G9 (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; RNDDH 2023-01-12). InSight Crime designates him as "arguably the most powerful person in Haiti" since the death of Jovenel Moïse (2022-11-24). He was sanctioned by the UN Security Council in October 2022 for [UN English version] "serious human rights abuses" and "acts that threaten the peace, security and stability" of Haiti (UN 2022-10-21).

According to InSight Crime in July 2022 and the RNDDH in January 2023, G9 gang leaders were:

Gang	InSight Crime (2022-07-18)	RNDDH (2023-01-12)
Belekou	Andris Icard, alias Iska	Iscar Andrice
Nan Boston	Cendy Marcellin, alias Zoé	Mathias
Nan Chabon	Serge Alectis, alias Ti Junior	-
Delmas	Jimmy Chérizier, alias Barbecue	Jimmy Chérizier, alias Barbecue
Krache dife	James Alexander, alias Sonson	-
Simon Pelé	Albert Stevenson, alias Djouma	-
Nan Ti Bwa	Christ-Roi Chéry alias Krisla	Christ-Roi Chéry alias Krisla
Waf Jérémie	Jean Emiliano Micanor, alias Micano	Monel Felix alias Roi Mikanò

Both sources also name Ézéchiél or Ezeckiel Alexander as leader of Baz Pilate (InSight Crime 2022-07-18; RNDDH 2023-01-12).

According to the report published by GI-TOC, G9 includes [GI-TOC English version] "former and serving police officers, young ex-Lavalas members, PHTK's political base from working-class neighborhoods, deportees and former soldiers" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 16).

Sources report that G9's main activity is extortion (BBC 2022-12-11; InSight Crime 2022-07-18). The BBC indicates that it [BBC English version] "is notorious for seizing lorries transporting goods and extorting companies" (2022-08-10). In September 2022, G9 seized the Varreux petrol terminal [and imposed a fuel blockade (Al Jazeera 2023-01-02)] to force the resignation of Ariel Henry (Crisis Group 2022-12-14, 2; HaïtiLibre 2022-10-01). This blockade paralyzed the country and seriously aggravated its humanitarian situation (BBC 2022-12-11; Défenseurs plus 2022-11-24). Authorities regained control of the Varreux Terminal in early November 2022 (Al Jazeera 2023-01-02; CNN 2022-11-06), following alleged negotiations with criminals, which were denied by the government (CNN 2022-11-06).

According to an RNDDH report cited by InSight Crime, 11 criminal organizations in Port-au-Prince have "friendly" and "support[ive]" relations with G9 and, together, they are referred to as "G20" (InSight Crime 2022-07-18). According to the report published by the GI-TOC, these links are part of a strategy to spread the influence of the G9 into other regions of the country (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 17).

Sources state that the G9 area of influence is concentrated in Port-au-Prince (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 16; InSight Crime 2022-07-18). The report published by the GI-TOC in October 2022 states that the G9 gangs [GI-TOC English version] "exercise power in the capital primarily, and especially in the communes of Delmas, Pétion Ville and part of Carrefour, thanks to alliances with

other gangs that control districts of certain communes of the Western Department" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 16). In January 2023, the RNDDH reported that the Krisla [Tibwa] gang was present in Carrefour, that the Nan Boston, Nan Belekou, and Warf Jérémié gangs were in Cité Soleil, that G9 was in Delmas, Tibwa, Martissant, and Baz Pilate was in Portail Léogane (RNDDH 2023-01-12). Sources indicate that G9 controls the coastal territory of the capital (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 16) or the territory where the coastal ports and oil terminals are located, giving it an important advantage in exercising control over the country's economy (BBC 2022-08-10).

3.2.2 G-Pèp [G-Pep, GPEP]

G-Pep is described by sources as a federation of gangs that opposes G9 (*Haiti Liberté* 2022-07-13; InSight Crime 2022-11-24; RNDDH 2022-08-16, para. 1). Its leader is Jean Pierre Gabriel [Gabriel Jean Pierre], alias Ti Gabriel [or Gabo] (*Haiti Liberté* 2022-07-13; RNDDH 2022-08-16, para. 1). Sources report that G-Pep is associated with the opposition (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18) to PHTK (InSight Crime 2022-11-24).

The report published by the GI-TOC reports that G-Pep has been fighting G9 affiliated gangs in Cité Soleil since 2020 (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18). According to the RNDDH, the massacre in Cité Soleil in July 2022 was the result of their rivalry in that territory (2022-08-16, para. 1, 4).

The report published by the GI-TOC states that 400 Mawozo [GI-TOC English version] "aligned" with G-Pep when their leader was extradited to the US in May 2022 (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 13, 18). The RNDDH, for its part, indicated in January 2023 that the two groups were allies (2023-01-12). According to the report published by the GI-TOC, this coalition was considered [GI-TOC English version] "a step towards expansion from the capital into other regions of Haiti" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 13). According to InSight Crime, Cité Soleil has long been a bastion of G-Pep (2022-07-21).

3.2.3 400 Mawozo

A BBC article on the gang war in Port-au-Prince presents 400 Mawozo as "one of the capital's most feared gangs" (2022-08-10). According to the report published by the GI-TOC, it is considered [GI-TOC English version] "the largest [gang] in Haiti" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 17). Sources report that the group is known to have committed many kidnappings in 2021 (AlterPresse 2023-01-10; *The Washington Post* 2021-12-16). Its leaders, Joseph Wilson, alias Lanmò San Jou, and Jermaine Stephenson, alias Gaspiyay, are the subject of rewards being offered by the US government in exchange for information that may lead to their arrest (AlterPresse 2023-01-10; *HaïtiLibre* 2022-11-08). Without providing further details, the report published by GI-TOC states that, according to a study it conducted, the group is so popular that it has created a waiting list for recruitment (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 4). According to the same source, it is made up of [GI-TOC English version] "deportees, former leaders of popular opposition organizations, former low-level smugglers on the Haitian-Dominican border, as well as police officers" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18). Sources dating from 2022 and 2023 mention that 400 Mawozo is allied to G-Pep (RNDDH 2023-01-12; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 13, 18; InSight Crime 2022-05-20).

According to a BBC article published in August 2022, 400 Mawozo is the gang that [BBC English version] "commands the biggest swathe of territory" (2022-08-10). Sources indicate that 400 Mawozo controls Croix-des-Bouquets [east of Port-au-Prince] (BBC 2022-12-11; InSight Crime 2022-11-24; *The Haitian Times* 2022-09-12). The report published by GI-TOC describes its territory in October 2022 as follows:

The gang is principally based in the outskirts of Ganthier commune in the eastern Croix des Bouquets arrondissement and in the communes within Port-au-Prince, such as Tabarre and residential areas of Pétion Ville, such as Vivy Michel, Belvil and Pernier. It has branches in Gros Morne, in the north of Haiti, and in the Dominican Republic. (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 17, 18)

The BBC similarly notes that the group controls the road to the Dominican Republic, as well as access to the north of the country (2022-08-10).

3.2.4 Chen Mechan

Information on the Chen Mechan gang was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The RNDDH named it among the most powerful gangs [as of January 2023] in Haiti and reported that its leader was [translation] "Steevenson or Claudy Célestin, alias Chen Mechan" (2023-01-12). According to sources, the group is part of G9 (RNDDH 2023-01-12; InSight Crime 2022-05-20). It faced 400 Mawozo in April 2022 in the Plaine du Cul-de-Sac (RNDDH 2023-01-12). For further information on the rivalry between Chen Mechan and 400 Mawozo, see to Response to Information Request HTI201064 of July 2022. Chen Mechan's territory appears on maps available online (France 24 2022-11-11; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 17). According to the RNDDH, it is located around Croix-des-Missions, in the commune of Tabarre (2023-01-12).

3.2.5 5 Seconds Gang [Village de Dieu, IZO, IZO 5 second, 5 segonn]

The 5 Seconds leader is Izo (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; HaïtiLibre 2022-10-09; RNDDH 2023-01-12), alias Johnson André (RNDDH 2023-01-12). The RNDDH also identified Emmanuel Salomon, alias Manno, as another leader of the group (2023-01-12). According to the report published by the GI-TOC, the group is made up of [GI-TOC English version] "young people from the shanty towns of the metropolitan area. The majority are former members of vigilante brigades and popular organizations close to Fanmi Lavalas" (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18). According to the same source, the group's main activities are kidnappings and hijacking goods vehicles and, with the Grand Ravine [or Tilapli] gang, it controls most of the motorbike-taxi ranks (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18). The *Guardian* reports that in June 2022 it seized control of the Supreme Court in Port-au-Prince (2022-09-18). In October 2022, it attacked the Moulins d'Haïti area in Canaan, at the northern exit of Port-au-Prince (InSight Crime 2022-10-13; HaïtiLibre 2022-10-09). Défenseurs plus reports that it was a rival of the Tilapli gang, but allied with the [translation] "Torcel gang" (2023-01-13a).

The gang's area of influence is illustrated on maps available online (BBC 2022-08-10; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 17; France 24 2022-11-11). Sources report that the 5 Seconds gang is present in Village-de-Dieu (*Le National* 2023-01-20; RNDDH 2023-01-12; InSight Crime 2022-06-16). According to some sources, it also occupies the area of Martissant (RNDDH 2023-01-12; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18) or the access to the south of the country [from Port-au-Prince] (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 18; InSight Crime 2022-10-13; BBC 2022-08-10). The report published by the GI-TOC states that it fights for the Martissant area with the Grand Ravine and Ti Bwa gangs (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 14). RNDDH added that it was also active in Lafiteau and Canaan (2023-01-12). The attack on Moulins d'Haïti in October was interpreted by some sources as an attempt by the gang to take control of the metropolitan area's northern exit (InSight Crime 2022-10-13; HaïtiLibre 2022-10-09). The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) [3], citing an article by Radio France internationale (RFI), reports that the group competes with other gangs in the Cabaret region,

north of the capital, for control of the Lafiteau port, the industrial zone surrounding it and national route 1, which leads to Artibonite Department (ACLED 2022-12-07).

3.2.6 Gangs by Departments

Two local sources interviewed about the presence of criminal gangs in the territory described it as follows:

Arrondissement	Commune	Gangs according to Défenseurs plus (2023-01-13a)	Gangs according to RNDDH (2023-01-12)
Arcahaie	Cabaret		5 Seconds/Village de Dieu Big-C Bogi
Croix-des-Bouquets	Croix-des-Bouquets	400 Mawozo Canaan	400 Mawozo Vitelòm 5 Seconds/Village de Dieu
Cornillon		400 Mawozo	
Port-au-Prince	Carrefour		Kris la Tibwa
Cité Soleil		G-Pèp G9 Brooklyn	
Delmas	G9 Krache dife	G9	
Pétion-Ville	Ti Makak Bristou Torcel 2, 5, 7	Timakak Vitelòm	
Port-au-Prince	5 Seconds Tilapli Kris la	5 Seconds/Village de Dieu G9 Gran Ravin Tibwa Baz Pilate Maxime Auguste	
Tabarre	Torcel	Vitelòm Chen Mechan	

Ouest Department

Arrondissement	Commune	Gangs according to Défenseurs plus (2023-01-13a)	Gangs according to RNDDH (2023-01-12)
Artibonite		Jean Denis	
Dessalines	Petite-Rivière l'Artibonite	de Gran grif Palmis Kokorat San Ras	Savien
Gonaïves		Polda	Kokorat San Ras

Arrondissement Commune	Gangs according to Défenseurs plus (2023-01-13a)	Gangs according to RNDDH (2023-01-12)
Big Morne	Big Morne	
Artibonite Department		

Arrondissement Commune	Gangs according to Défenseurs plus (2023-01-13a)	Gangs according to RNDDH (2023-01-12)
	3 million	
Port-de-Paix	Krache dife Bon diri Trois rivières	3 million
Nord-Ouest Department		

3.3 Power of Gangs

Although local sources indicate that gangs now control the entire territory of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings (*Le Nouvelliste* 2022-12-27; Défenseurs plus 2022-11-08), others speak of 60 percent of the capital (Crisis Group 2022-12-09; AP 2022-10-100 28).

Sources claim that the state is losing control of Haiti's territory to gangs (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; AFP 2023-01-10). Some report that criminal gangs are increasingly seizing control of economic infrastructures (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 3, 12; Crisis Group 2022-12-14, 2), "including markets, ports and main roads" (Crisis Group 2022-12-14, 2). The report published by the GI-TOC indicates the following:

[GI-TOC English version]

Gangs have also captured large swathes of Haiti's economy. They not only profit from kidnapping, raiding businesses and stealing food, fuel and other supplies, but have also taken control of key areas of economic activity, drawing revenues from customs, public markets, water and electricity distribution networks, and bus stations and tap-tap stations. (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 4)

Several sources point to the "impunity" with which criminal gangs can act in Haiti (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; UN 2022-10, para. 4; France 24 with AFP 2022-07-26). An RNDDH program manager, interviewed by RFI, speaks of a [translation] "system-built impunity" (RFI 2023-01-03). The report by the BAI and the IJDH, based on sources regarding corruption in Haiti, notes that [translation] "chronic impunity ... , particularly due to government corruption and collusion with gangs, facilitates and aggravates governance crises, and is a direct cause of the growing insecurity" (2022-12, 1, references omitted).

Sources also indicate that criminal gangs in Haiti have access to powerful weapons (Crisis Group 2022-12-14, 1; UN 2022-10, para. 4) or that they are better armed than the security forces (DW 2022-08-10).

4. State Protection

4.1 Police and Judiciary

Several sources also report that the Haitian National Police (Police nationale d'Haïti, PNH) is no longer able to compete with gangs (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; *Le Nouvelliste* 2022-12-27; UN 2022-10-13, para. 17). It lacks resources (*Miami Herald* 2023-01-09; France 24 with AFP 2022-07-26). Police officers, in addition to being targeted themselves by gangs, face attacks of police stations and seizures of their weapons (The New Humanitarian 2022-11-14; GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, 12). Following the murder of six of their colleagues by gang members in Liancourt [Artibonite], in January 2023, police officers demonstrated their discontent in the streets of Port-au-Prince (AFP 2023-01-26; RFI 2023-01-27) and stated that they no longer have confidence in the state authorities (RFI 2023-01-27). On 26 January 2023, the RNDDH published a report on the [translation] "serial assassinations of PNH agents" in which it reports the deaths of 18 agents since the beginning of the year (2023-01-26, para. 3).

According to the RNDDH, gangs also benefit from the corruption of some police officers and the protection of various political actors:

[translation]

In conflicts between rival gangs, PNH armoured cars are often made available to the gang tied to the ruling power to fight their opponent. For example, in 2020, during a massacre in Bel Air and then in April 2022 during the conflict between Chen Mechan and 400 Mawozo at the Plaine du Cul-de-Sac, armoured cars were given to Jimmy Chérizier alias Barbecue to reinforce the Chen Mechan armed group, ally of G-9 an fanmi e alye.

Recently, in July 2022, heavy machinery from the National Center for Equipment (Centre national d'équipements, CNE) was made available to G-9 an fanmi e alye to demolish buildings and dig passages to reach the stronghold of the gang leader of G-Pep, Gabriel Jean Pierre alias. Gabo/Tigabriel. (2023-01-12)

Sources lastly report that the Haitian judicial system is dysfunctional (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; BAI & IJDH 2022-12). In its report for 2022, HRW notes that the Court of Justice cannot render decisions; that the appointment of additional judges is stalled; that after gangs took control of the courthouse of Port-au-Prince, irrecoverable evidence had disappeared; that the number of trials that were held between October 2021 and September 2022 was approximately 200, and that in some regions no trials have been held for three years (2023-01-12).

4.2 State Power

Sources are increasingly talking about an "absence" or non-existence of the state in Haiti (Défenseurs plus 2023-01-13a; *The Guardian* 2023-01-12; AFP 2023-01-10). HRW reports that, [HRW English version] "[i]n 2022, Haiti remained in a long-standing political, security and humanitarian crisis that ... left all government branches inoperative" (2023-01-12). Sources indicated in January 2023 that Haiti finds itself with not one elected official after the expiration of the mandate of the last 10 senators holding office on 9 January and a failure to organize elections (UN 2023-01-24a; AFP 2023-01-10). Jacqueline Charles, a *Miami Herald* journalist who has been covering Haiti for over a decade (*Miami Herald* n.d.), summarizes the situation as follows:

Now, ... there are few constitutional entities, in existence beyond the struggling, ill-equipped [PNH], a reconstituted army and the court of auditors and administrative disputes whose members' 10-year

mandates are also nearing an expiration. There is no functioning electoral commission, no functioning Supreme Court, no constitutional court.

There is not a single elected official in the entire country of nearly 12 million people – not a council member, not a mayor and certainly not a president.

This leaves only Ariel Henry as prime minister, ... who was never ratified by law, [and who] became the country's interim leader when Jovenel Moïse, the last elected president, tapped him to carry out day-to-day operations as head of the government shortly before his assassination on July 7, 2021. (*Miami Herald* 2023-01-09)

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] [GI-TOC English version] "This report was researched and written by a Haitian research team who wish to remain anonymous for security reasons. The interviews published in this report were carried out during 2021 by a second team of local researchers, who also wish to remain anonymous for security reasons"; the report was completed by researchers from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), which also published the report (GI-TOC & Haitian researchers 2022-10, ii).

[2] The Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) is a US-based non-profit organization and the Bureau des avocats internationaux (BAI) is its sister organization located in Haiti (BAI & IJDH n.d.).

[3] The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a non-profit organization that conducts "a disaggregated data collection, analysis and crisis mapping project" (ACLED n.d.).

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Internet sites, including: Bertelsmann Stiftung; CBC; *Courrier international*; Global News; Global Protection Cluster – Protection Sector; *The Globe and Mail*; Haiti – embassy in Canada, ministère de la Communication; Makyavel Studios; *Le Monde*; *La Presse*; Radio-télévision belge de la Communauté française; Rezo Nòdwès; TV5MONDE; US – Department of State.

Associated documents

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Haiti

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[Haïti : information sur la situation sécuritaire et la criminalité, y compris les principaux groupes criminels, leur organisation, leurs activités et leurs zones d'influence, y compris à l'extérieur de Port-au-Prince \(août 2022-janvier 2023\) \[HTI201332.F\]](#) (Response, French)

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