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IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (Author)

Haiti: Security situation and criminal groups, including the Group of 9 (G9) [also called the G9 in family and alliance (an fanmi e alye)], including its activities, in particular kidnappings and youth recruitment, areas of operation, targets, structure and leaders; links between criminal groups and politicians; state protection (2020–June 2022) [HTI201064.FE]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

This Response to Information Request replaces Response to Information Request HTI200655 of July 2021.

1. Security Situation

According to sources, it is ["difficult" (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F3) or "hard" (US 29 Apr. 2020)] to authenticate crime statistics in Haiti, and crimes are underreported (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F3; US 29 Apr. 2020).

According to foreign travel advisories in various countries, the security situation is [Canada English version] "unpredictable" (Canada 22 May 2021), [translation] "continues to worsen" (France 27 May 2022), or violence is "common" (US 1 June 2021).

The National Human Rights Defense Network (Réseau national de défense des droits humains, RNDDH), a Haitian NGO engaged in human rights education and monitoring of human rights violations (RNDDH n.d.), stated in February 2022 that, over the past four years, [RNDDH English version] "the overall human rights situation in Haiti has only worsened. The rights to life and security have been systematically violated" and described the Haitian State's "abysmal failure to ensure the security of the people" (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 33). Sources report that the deteriorating security situation in 2020 is one cause of the demonstrations against [former] President Jovenel Moïse (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15; UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 17). According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a non-profit organization that conducts "disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping" in various regions of the world, including Latin America (ACLED n.d.), there were more than 400 cases of

political violence and protests in 2020, including "almost" 330 deaths, 90 percent of which are attributed to criminal groups (ACLED Feb. 2021, 17).

Media sources indicate that, on 7 July 2021, President Moïse was assassinated, reportedly by mercenaries, in his home in Port-au-Prince (BBC 12 July 2021; Reuters 8 July 2021; *The Washington Post* 7 July 2021). According to sources, following Moïse's death, there was "a lack of clarity" (*The Washington Post* 7 July 2021) or "confusion" (*The Guardian* 8 July 2021; Reuters 10 July 2021) over who has the authority to lead the country (*The Guardian* 8 July 2021; Reuters 10 July 2021; *The Washington Post* 7 July 2021). Sources indicate that Jimmy Cherizier [Cerizier, Cherisier], [alias Barbecue], a former police officer, now the leader of the G9, issued a "veiled warning" (AP 11 July 2021) or called for [translation] "revenge" (Radio-Canada 14 July 2021) [in a video posted (Radio-Canada 14 July 2021)] in response to the assassination (AP 11 July 2021; Radio-Canada 14 July 2021). According to sources published in 2022, since Moïse's assassination, the security situation has deteriorated (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 11; Défenseurs Plus 17 June 2022). For further information on the political situation in Haiti, see Response to Information Request HTI200654 of July 2021.

Sources report that there are 500,000 illegal weapons in circulation (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]; CARDH 22 July 2020, para. 5) according to Haiti's National Commission for Disarmament, Dismantlement and Reintegration (Commission nationale de désarmement, démantèlement et réinsertion, CNDDR) (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]). Based on cases reported by the Haitian National Police (Police nationale d'Haïti, PNH), a February 2021 UN report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (Bureau intégré des Nations Unies en Haïti, BINUH) notes that 1,380 voluntary homicides were reported in 2020, 75 percent of which occurred in the Ouest department, representing a 20 percent increase compared to 2019 (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 19). According to the RNDDH, [RNDDH English version] "at least" 3,294 people, including 153 police officers, were murdered between 2018 and 2021 (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 4). In June 2022, UN News, the UN's news portal, reported that Haiti is in a [translation] "state of terror" and that, according to the PNH, 201 people were killed and 198 abducted in May 2022 (UN 16 June 2022).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), [HRW English version] "[v]iolence is escalating [in Haiti]" (HRW 28 Feb. 2022). The RNDDH reports the following on the proliferation of gangs in Haiti:

[RNDDH English version]

Since 2018, the Haitian people have witnessed the rampant gangs[t]erization of the country. Today, all geographic departments have at least one (1) gang operating there. These various armed gangs engage in fierce hegemonic struggles, for control of the territories, for political and electoral purposes. They also [fight] among themselves to control markets, private enterprises, decentralized state bodies and public transport stations. (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 5)

According to the same source, [RNDDH English version] "[a]rmed gangs are expanding their territory every day" and "[n]ew pockets of bandits" have also formed since the arrival of Ariel Henry as Prime Minister, including in "neighbourhoods that were previously considered relatively quiet" (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 11, 35).

Sources note that violence by armed gangs displaced 450 families (UN Mar. 2021, 88) or [HRW English version] "at least" 1,221 residents (HRW 13 Jan. 2021) of Port-au-Prince's Bel-Air neighbourhood in August 2020 (UN Mar. 2021, 88; HRW 13 Jan. 2021). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), a July 2020 cyclone and gang violence were the cause of [HRW English version] "the majority" of

displacements that affected "at least" 12,000 people in 2020 (HRW 13 Jan. 2021). In its report on the events of 2021, the same source states that gangs are fighting over territory in Port-au-Prince, where [HRW English version] "approximately" 1.5 million people live, displacing 19,100 (HRW 28 Feb. 2022). The RNDDH states that, due to the country's insecurity, [RNDDH English version] "[t]housands of families have been forced to flee their homes and take refuge in refugee camps or have been forced to rent another home," including residents of Village de Dieu, Martissant, Fontamara, La Tremblay, Duval Roche, Michaud, Jumecourt, Bel-Air, Cité Soleil and La Saline (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 33). The same source states that this [RNDDH English version] "exposes [displaced persons] to attacks on life and property" and "worsens" their economic situation (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 33).

In an interview with the Research Directorate, the Director of Défenseurs plus, a collective advocating for human rights in Haïti [translation] "to achieve a true democratic rule of law" (Défenseurs plus n.d.), stated that unprecedented violence among criminal groups threatens public safety and individual freedoms, resulting in violations of fundamental civil, economic, political and socio-cultural rights (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the RNDDH in a report about a violent war among rival criminal groups in a region located between Port-au-Prince and the Dominican Republic:

The conflict took place from 24 April to 6 May 2022, between the 400 Mawozo gang and gang members of the Chen Mechan base, assisted by members of the G9 coalition of criminal groups. In the conflict [RNDDH English version] "at least" 191 people were killed (107 men, 76 women, 6 girls and 2 boys). Of the victims identified, "at least" 48 were presented as members of gangs. "[M]any women were raped before being killed," including 17 members of the Koko Fè base, which is supposedly close to the Chen Mechan base. Two months later, members of the Chen Mechan base continue to murder young people, "under the pretext that members of the population provide information to the 400 Mawozo gangs" (RNDDH 27 June 2022, 3, 4, 5, 17, 19, 30, 31).

Sources also report that gangsters (*Le Nouvelliste* 14 June 2022) or armed members of the 5 seconds gang (HaïtiLibre 17 juin 2022) of Village-de-Dieu stormed and seized the Palace of Justice in Port-au-Prince (*Le Nouvelliste* 14 June 2022; HaïtiLibre 17 June 2022). According to sources, armed individuals drove authorities from the Palace of Justice on 10 June 2022 and were still in control of the building on 14 June (FJKL 14 June 2022) or 17 June (HaïtiLibre 17 June 2022). According to the Fondasyon Je Klere (FJKL), a citizens' foundation in Haiti advocating for human rights and sustainable development (FJKL n.d.), Palace of Justice employees were able to escape thanks in part to police intervention (FJKL 14 June 2022). Sources state that the authorities are unable to say when the police will regain control of the premises (*Le Nouvelliste* 14 June 2022; HaïtiLibre 17 June 2022).

1.1 Road Situation

Regarding the insecurity on the roads, *L'Actualité*, a Canadian public affairs magazine (*L'Actualité* n.d.), states that the 2.5kilometre stretch of the only paved road linking Haiti's southern peninsula to Port-au-Prince is scattered with debris and puddles on its four lanes, no longer maintained due to insecurity (*L'Actualité* 6 Apr. 2022). According to the same source, the road passes through the Martissant neighbourhood, a dangerous area where criminal groups have been fighting for control of the territory (*L'Actualité* 6 Apr. 2022). *L'Actualité* observes that

[translation]

To reach the South from the centre of Port-au-Prince, there are two other options: a narrow dirt road, winding through the mountains, accessible only by motorcycle, on foot or in a four-wheel drive vehicle, and where every passage has a price; or the sea, an unpredictable route, accessible only to state employees and those with the means to travel. (*L'Actualité* 6 Apr. 2022)

Similarly, UN News, citing the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Haiti and head of the BINUH, reports that [translation] "movement along the main national roads linking the capital to the rest of the country has been seriously compromised as gangs erect barricades to restrict access to the areas they control" (UN 16 June 2022). A UNDP volunteer who lives in Port-au-Prince reported the following:

[UN English version]

Over the last year, as the security situation has deteriorated, I have also had to be careful which roads I take to get to work. This is the case for me, and other colleagues who live in areas affected by rising insecurity such as Carrefour, Mariani, Merger, Gressier, or Léogâne. My wife and I are obliged to stay with family in Port-au-Prince during the week, even though we have built a family home elsewhere. ... Commuting is too dangerous. The authorities have lost control of the Martissant-Fontamara junction, and gangsters are pillaging the population, raping women and shooting at passengers on buses or in cars. (UN 16 Apr. 2022)

1.2 Impact of the COVID-19 Health Crisis

According to a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),

[translation]

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the social and security situation [in Haiti] as its emergence has been juxtaposed with an already difficult humanitarian situation that includes food insecurity, malnutrition, health emergencies and population movements caused by community violence. (UN Mar. 2021, 31)

According to the February 2021 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate, [UN English version] "extensive" school closures occurred in 2019 and 2020 due to the pandemic, protests and "insecurity due to gang activities" (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 47). According to the OCHA, children who do not attend school are more likely to be recruited by criminal groups (UN Mar. 2021, 75, 84).

According to the Défenseurs plus Director, judicial proceedings are [translation] "at a near standstill" in Haiti, particularly as a result of measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). The French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, in its note to travellers to Haiti in May 2022, also stated with respect to the security situation and COVID19 that [translation] "the state of public health emergency is declared until further notice" (France 27 May 2022).

2. Kidnappings

Sources report an increase in kidnappings in Haiti in 2020 compared to 2019 (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15; UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 19). According to the report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate released in February 2021, between February 2020 and February 2021, [UN English version] "kidnappings followed a concerning trend as they increased by 200 per cent compared with the previous year (a total of 234 cases, including 59 women and 37 minors, were reported in 2020

compared with 78 in 2019)" (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 19). According to the Centre for Human Rights Analysis and Research (Centre d'analyse et de recherche en droits de l'homme, CARDH), a Port-au-Prince-based nonprofit organization cited by Reuters, there were 796 kidnappings in 2020 (Reuters 26 Apr. 2021) and "at least" 91 abductions in April 2021 (Reuters 19 May 2021). Défenseurs plus, quoted in a report by AyiboPost, an online media platform that focuses on explanatory journalism regarding Haiti (AyiboPost n.d.), and Connectas, a media platform that focuses on development issues in the Americas (Connectas n.d.), estimates that [translation] "more than" 1,000 kidnappings were committed in 2020 (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]).

Sources report that criminal groups are demanding [translation] "exorbitant" (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021) or "lucrative" ransoms from victims' families (Reuters 19 May 2021). Sources state that victims may regain their freedom if their families pay the kidnappers (US 29 Apr. 2020; Reuters 19 May 2021), in "most cases" (US 29 Apr. 2020). AyiboPost and Connectas state that kidnappers threaten to kill victims if their families report the kidnapping to the police or the press, or if they try to avoid paying the ransom, and report on the case of an abducted schoolgirl found dead in October 2020 (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]). According to Djems Olivier, a sociologist quoted by AyiboPost and Connectas,

[translation]

the increase in kidnappings is due to how easy it is to collect money. "Until recently, people were assaulted when they were returning from the bank. But these acts have gone down significantly. Criminals think of other strategies, and kidnapping is a quicker way to make money. There are groups that specialize in kidnapping, but there are more and more small armed groups that are also doing it, because it is lucrative." (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021])

Sources report that, in October 2021 in Ganthier [a small town east of Port-au-Prince], the 400 Mawozo gang kidnapped 17 missionaries, including 16 Canadians and 1 American, who were returning from a visit to an orphanage (*The Guardian* 17 Oct. 2021; Radio-Canada with AFP 6 Dec. 2021; AP 20 Dec. 2021), but that 5 were released (Radio-Canada with AFP 6 Dec. 2021; AP 20 Dec. 2021), and 12 remained hostages of the gang until they were able to escape on foot after 2 months in captivity (AP 20 Dec. 2021). According to sources, 12 people, including 8 Turkish nationals, were also kidnapped in May 2022 (AFP 9 May 2022; RFI 16 June 2022) between the communes of Croix-des-Bouquets and Ganthier in an area controlled by the 400 Mawozo gang (AFP 9 May 2022). The same sources report that the 12 people kidnapped by the gang were released, some for ransom (AFP 15 June 2022; RFI 16 June 2022).

The Défenseurs plus Director stated that kidnappings have increased since the assassination of Jovenel Moïse and that they are one of the main threats to people's freedom and the security of Haitians across the country, particularly in Port-au-Prince (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). According to the RNDDH, on average, five people were abducted each day in 2020 and 2021 (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 10). The same source reports that, in January 2022, [RNDDH English version] "many spectacular cases of kidnapping for ransom" were recorded, and gives 12 examples of incidents over the course of which at least 53 people were kidnapped (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 32).

2.1 Targeted Individuals

Sources report that the wave of kidnappings has involved victims from different social groups [including doctors, students, merchants and police officers (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021])] [as well as the poor and members of the middle class (Reuters 26 Apr. 2021)] (AyiboPost and Connectas

[Feb. 2021]; Reuters 26 Apr. 2021). Other sources highlight cases of kidnappings involving children (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]; UN Mar. 2021, 82; Reuters 26 Apr. 2021). According to some sources, kidnappings ["disproportionately" (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F3)] affect women and girls (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F3; UN Mar. 2021, 80). Other sources report kidnappings targeting health workers, among others (MSF 25 May 2022; Insecurity Insight and SHCC 24 May 2022, 2).

The Défenseurs plus Director stated in June 2022 that criminal groups target [translation] "everyone" in kidnappings, but they are increasingly turning to "ordinary people" and are attacking fewer powerful and wealthy people, as they have their own private security guards protecting them (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). According to the same source, by targeting ordinary people for kidnapping, these gangs encounter less physical resistance, while remaining confident that the victims' families will endeavour to pay the ransom (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

3. Main Criminal Groups and Their Leaders

According to sources, Haitian criminal groups have become more powerful since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022; Reuters 5 May 2022). Sources estimate that there were 76 armed gangs in Haiti in May 2019 (*Le Nouvelliste* 6 May 2019), "more than" 150 criminal groups in 2020 (US 30 Mar. 2021, 4) and 177 active groups in March 2021 (Olivier 18 Mar. 2021, 85). According to HRW, [HRW English version] "some" 95 gangs were fighting over territory in Port-au-Prince in 2021 (HRW 28 Feb. 2022). The names of the main criminal groups could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the RDDH, in May 2020 new criminal group leaders were installed in various Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods that had been [RNDDH English version] "freshly conquered" by Serge Alectis, alias Ti Junior, who controls the Croix-des-Bossales and La Saline neighbourhoods, Micanor Altes (or Monel Felix), alias Roi Mikanó in Wharf Jérémie, and Jimmy Cherizier, who controls Delmas 6:

- Garry Lyron (alias Coby), Chancerelles leader
- Ronald Alcide (alias Depòte) in Nan Tokyo
- Daniel (alias Tapajè) in Delmas 2
- Colson Jean in Nan Barozi
- Richardson Louis, leader of the G-8 gang, operating in Upper Delmas 4
- Josué in Lower Delmas 4
- Mackenson Louis, leader of the Peace Village gang
- Ti Jude, leader of the Fort Dimanche gang
- Jean Gardy Alectis (alias Dyòl) in Nan Bwadòm (RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 77).

According to a report published by the International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) and the Haitian Observatory for Crimes Against Humanity (Observatoire haïtien des crimes contre l'humanité, OHCCH) [1], those involved in deadly attacks in La Saline in 2018, Bel-Air in 2019, and Cité Soleil in Port-au-Prince in 2020 include Serge Alectis, Jimmy Cherizier, the Delmas 6 gang, the Nan Bwadòm gang and the Wharf Jérémie gang (IHRC and OHCCH Apr. 2021, 19).

According to sources, further to a mobilization of dissatisfied police officers within the PNH who held demonstrations to demand better working conditions, a new armed group composed of serving or decertified police officers emerged [in 2018 (Insight Crime 26 Mar. 2021) or in February 2020 (UN Mar. 2021, 32)], with the nickname Fantom [Fantôme] 509 (Insight Crime 26 Mar. 2021; UN Mar. 2021, 32). Sources note that members of the group sometimes wear their police uniforms while carrying out crimes (HaïtiLibre 24 Mar. 2021; Insight Crime 26 Mar. 2021).

Sources published in 2022 also report that the 400 Mawozo criminal group has become a powerful gang (InSight Crime 23 Mar. 2022; RFI 4 May 2022). Sources report that the group's leader, Germine Joly [Joly Germine] alias "Yonyon," was extradited to the US in May 2022 (HaïtiLibre 4 May 2022; RFI 4 May 2022); he was indicted by a US federal grand jury for his involvement in the kidnapping of 16 US citizens in October 2021, while he was in a Haitian prison (HaïtiLibre 12 May 2022).

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the Director of Défenseurs plus:

It is [translation] "difficult, if not impossible," to determine which criminal groups are the largest, as their situation is variable and changes quite rapidly. A few rare hierarchical and well-organized groups, with sub-leaders who can take over to keep the gang going should the leader die, may be the exception. As a criminal group's significance in Haiti is linked to the notoriety of its leader and/or the nature and size of the territory it controls, its importance can vary rapidly: a major gang may lose power suddenly, after the assassination of its leader or the forced cession of its area of influence following a turf war, while an insignificant gang may become notorious overnight because it killed the leader of a rival gang or gained control of a coveted territory. For example, a gang from Village-de-Dieu attracted considerable media attention in June 2022 for seizing the Palace of Justice in Port-au-Prince, whereas until then the gang had been practically unknown (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

3.1 Activities

The Director of Défenseurs plus stated that gangs are involved in a wide range of criminal activities, including the following:

- Kidnapping
- Armed robbery
- Bank and commercial robberies
- Attacks on public and private infrastructure
- Drug and human trafficking
- Murder and contract killing
- Prostitution (including of underage girls)
- Counterfeiting and the production and sale of falsified official documents
- Recruitment (including of underage girls)
- War with other criminal groups to expand the territory of control (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

According to the ACLED, activities perpetrated by criminal groups include violent clashes between rival groups (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15). The same source adds that such attacks have also led to an increase in the number of kidnappings for ransom and rapes, which are used by criminal groups as "a weapon of

war" to secure the population's "allegiance" (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15). According to a June 2020 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate, the increase in kidnappings in February 2020 [UN English version] "may" be due to the need for new sources of income since the end of the 2019 protests (UN 15 June 2020, para. 11). According to sources, targeted assassinations and kidnappings against public figures have also been part of the arsenal of criminal groups [17 such targeted attacks were recorded by the ACLED in 2020 (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15)], including the assassination of Bâtonnier Monferrier Dorval in 2020 (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15; US 30 Mar. 2021, 3; UN Mar. 2021, 24).

Sources report that gangs carried out attacks from 4 to 6 November 2019 in the Bel-Air neighbourhood, causing three (UN Feb. 2020, 4) or four deaths (FJKL 29 Nov. 2019, 11) and the burning of some 30 residences (UN Feb. 2020, 4; FJKL 29 Nov. 2019, 2, 11). According to the same sources, gangs intervened at the instigation of Jimmy Cherizier in an effort to force demonstrators opposed to the Moïse government to remove their barricades from the street (UN Feb. 2020, 10; FJKL Nov. 29, 2019, 3).

In its *2020 Crime and Safety Report*, the US Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) notes that criminal groups set up barricades on highways to extort drivers (US 29 Apr. 2020).

According to sources, the Fantom 509 group [which vandalizes and loots citizens' property, among other activities (FJKL 21 Mar. 2021, 1)] set fire to a police station in Delmas in mid-March 2021, resulting in the release of four imprisoned police colleagues (FJKL 21 Mar. 2021, 1; HaïtiLibre 18 Mar. 2021).

3.2 Targeted Individuals

The Director of Défenseurs plus stated that Haitian criminal groups target everyone, as they [translation] "spare no one, and anyone can be in their sights," but they can be "sometimes selective" in choosing their victims depending on the criminal activity involved (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). According to the Director, human rights advocates, lawyers, judges and prosecutors, police officers, journalists, politicians, and individuals close to former President Jovenel Moïse are those [translation] "most generally" targeted by these gangs (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). The same source stated that women are [translation] "the only ones targeted" by activities relating to prostitution (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). The ACLED notes that members of the public are "often" targeted by gangs (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15). Sources note that officials (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15; US 30 Mar. 2021, 3), judges, lawyers and activists may also be targeted (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15). According to Freedom House, "police themselves are subject to lethal attacks by heavily armed criminal groups" (Freedom House 28 Feb. 2022, Sec. F3).

Sources report an increase in the number of cases involving children in criminal groups' line of fire (HaïtiLibre 15 Apr. 2021; *Miami Herald* 13 Apr. 2021; UN 15 Apr. 2021). For example, according to sources, on the night of 11 to 12 April 2021, a criminal group composed of more than 15 individuals attacked an orphanage in the Croix-des-Bouquets neighbourhood on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince [from which 400 prisoners had escaped less than two months earlier (Insight Crime 8 Mar. 2021; *Miami Herald* 13 Apr. 2021)], beat up the managers and raped two children and one woman (HaïtiLibre 15 Apr. 2021; *Miami Herald* 13 Apr. 2021). According to UNICEF, 73 women and children were victims of gangs between the last quarter of 2020 and mid-April 2021:

"Children and women in Haiti are no longer merely the victims of criminal gangs — they are increasingly becoming their targets," warns Jean Gough, UNICEF's Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean. "Whether kidnappings, rapes or even killings, more and more incidents of gang

violence have involved children and women in the past few weeks and months. This recent upsurge is fuelling insecurity in the impoverished country." (UN 15 Apr. 2021)

For information on gender-based and sexual violence in Haiti, including such acts by criminal groups, see Response to Information Request HTI200653 of June 2021.

3.3 Areas of Influence

Sources report that criminal groups control a number of "impoverished" neighbourhoods (ACLED Feb. 2021, 14)] in Port-au-Prince (ACLED Feb. 2021, 14; US 29 Apr. 2020). According to sources, neighbourhoods under the control of criminal groups include Martissant, Bel-Air (US 29 Apr. 2020; UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 18), Cité Soleil (US 29 Apr. 2020) and Village de Dieu (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 18). According to a September 2020 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate, the areas of influence of some criminal groups correspond to [UN English version] "populous areas that house major public markets and large polling stations" (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 15).

Other sources report the presence of criminal groups outside Port-au-Prince (ACLED Feb. 2021; US 29 Apr. 2020), such as in the South-East Department (département du Sud-Est) (ACLED Feb. 2021, 14) or Pétionville and along highways (US 29 Apr. 2020). According to the September 2020 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate, clashes between criminal groups increased between June and August 2020 in Cap-Haitien (Nord department) and Petite-Rivière-de-l'Artibonite (Artibonite department) among other areas, affecting thoroughfares (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 18). However, the February 2021 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate notes that, as a result of police operations starting in late 2020, criminal groups have been pushed to the outskirts or outside of Port-au-Prince, including [UN English version] "a few areas of the Artibonite Department, where gangs posed additional security threats" (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 18).

According to sources, the 400 Mawozo gang controls the commune of Croix-des-Bouquets (InSight Crime 23 Mar. 2022; RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 11) or the entire region located between Port-au-Prince and the border with the Dominican Republic (AFP 9 May 2022; RFI 16 June 2022). The RNDDH also states that the 400 Mawozo criminal group, who [RNDDH English version] "were content in the past to cloister in [their] fief," seeks to spread their influence in neighboring communes (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 11).

Sources also report warlike clashes between two rival gangs, the 400 Mawozo and the Chen Mechan [at Plaine du Cul-de-Sac (RFI 28 Apr. 2022; RNDDH 27 June 2022, 3)] in the commune of Croix-des-Bouquets, from 24 April (RFI 28 Apr. 2022; RNDDH 27 June 2022, 3; Haïti and UN 27 Apr. 2022) to 6 May 2022 (RNDDH 27 June 2022, 3). According to a situation report from the Haitian government and OCHA, the conflict zone was located [translation] "just a few hundred metres north of the Toussain Louverture international airport" (Haïti and UN 27 Apr. 2022). RFI states that, with the attack, the 400 Mawozo were trying to regain territory they had lost in 2018 (RFI 28 Apr. 2022).

The Director of Défenseurs plus stated that Port-au-Prince is the [translation] "main area of influence" and of clashes among criminal groups in Haiti, but their affiliates or smaller gangs are also found in secondary cities, while rural areas seem to be spared, though they are indirectly affected by the criminal activities of these gangs (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

3.4 Links Between Criminal Groups and the Authorities

Sources report that the use of criminal groups by political actors to repress opponents and demonstrators in rival neighbourhoods is part of the electoral campaign process in Haiti (ACLED Feb.

2021, 14; Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. B3). According to some sources, criminal groups are guaranteed impunity in exchange, along with resources in the form of weapons (ACLEDD Feb. 2021, 14; RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 98-99) and funding (ACLEDD Feb. 2021, 14). According to the RNDDH, armed gangs [RNDDH English version] "benefit [from] the protection of the police institution" (RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 98).

A February 2020 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate refers to the November 2019 attacks on the Bel-Air neighbourhood in which, according to [translation] "certain sources," "a representative of the authorities" reportedly asked five criminal organizations to intervene; the latter reportedly refused (UN Feb. 2020, 10). However, the same source adds that an intervention by Jimmy Cherizier a few days later [translation] "suggests a link between the state representative's approach to local organizations and the acts perpetrated by Cherizier and the gangs under his control" (UN Feb. 2020, 10). HRW also notes with respect to 2021, without providing further details, that [HRW English version] "Haitian civil society groups say insecurity is exacerbated by alleged complicity between politicians and gangs" (HRW 28 Feb. 2022).

The RNDDH explains that, since the assassination of the former president, existing gangs [RNDDH English version] "have also been reinforced by their protectors, the state authorities" (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 11). The same source states that this reinforcement is reflected in the expansion of their territory, for example, the expansion of the 400 Mawozo's territory in Croix-des-Bouquets, and the [RNDDH English version] "continued availability of arms, ammunition and large sums of money" (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 11). According to the same source,

[RNDDH English version]

these armed gangs, continuing to enjoy the unfailing protection of state authorities who want to maintain their power through them, are becoming more and more powerful and above all more arrogant in their modus operandi. As a result, they act with complete peace of mind and the number of victims is increasing. (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 35)

Sources published in 2020 and 2021 report links between the Moïse government and criminal groups (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]; RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 98). However, the director of Défenseurs plus stated that former President Jovenel Moïse had no known ties to criminal groups before he was assassinated, and that he was [translation] "rather ruthless and relatively effective" against these gangs (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). However, the same source stated that, even though there is no proven link between de facto Prime Minister Ariel Henry and criminal groups, there are [translation] "persistent rumours" suggesting that he was involved in some way in the assassination of Moïse and that he even contracted the gangs to carry out the assassination (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). Other sources report that Prime Minister Henry is under suspicion in the investigation into the death of Moïse and that he fired the chief prosecutor in Port-au-Prince after the prosecutor called him for questioning about his contact with one of the murder suspects (*The New York Times* 12 Jan. 2022; AFP 15 Sept. 2021).

4. G9

Sources report that nine criminal groups in Port-au-Prince have come together to form a coalition named the G9 (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]; RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 78-79) in June 2020 (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]). According to sources, the leader is Jimmy Cherizier (ACLEDD Feb.

2021, 14; AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]; HRW 28 Feb. 2022). According to HRW, Jimmy Chérizier is allegedly implicated in various acts of violence (HRW 28 Feb. 2022).

An RNDDH report lists the following constituent groups:

[RNDDH English version]

- Jimmy CHERISIER AKA Barbecue - Delmas 6
- Iscar ANDRICE Cité Soleil - Belekou
- Christ-Roi CHERY aka Chrisla - Nan Tibwa
- Serge Alectis alias Ti junior - La Saline
- Wilson PIERRE aka Sonson St Martin Street - Bel-air
- Micanor ALTES still known as Monel FELIX as King Mikanò - Wharf Jérémie
- Jouma ALBERT alias Zouma - Simon Pelé
- Ezéckiel ALEXANDRE - Pilate Base
- Matias SAINTIL - Nan Boston / Cité Soleil

... These nine (9) armed gang leaders are supported by a group of twenty (20) other gangs members [of lesser] organizational and territorial significance. Their leaders are referred to as bridgeheads or members of the G-20. (RNDDH 23 June 2020, paras. 79 and 80, emphasis in original)

The September 2020 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate states that the G9 claims to have social demands to address poverty in the most precarious neighbourhoods of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and that six other groups have joined the coalition (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 15 and 16). Sources report that the group is carrying out attacks on the population (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 31; *The Washington Post* 14 Aug. 2020). According to the *Washington Post*, the group has also hijacked fuel trucks, extorted money from businesses and carried out kidnappings for ransom (*The Washington Post* 14 Aug. 2020). The RNDDH also reports that, with the creation of the G9, [RNDDH English version] "the security situation of the country has worsened" (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 6).

4.1 Areas of Influence

According to the RNDDH, the G9's areas of influence are concentrated in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and include the following neighbourhoods: Delmas 6, Belekou, Nan Tibwa, La Saline, Bel-Air, Wharf Jérémie, Simon Pelé, Base Pilate and Nan Boston in Cité Soleil (RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 79). The September 2020 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate also states that the G9 controls Cité Soleil, La Saline, and Lower Delmas (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 15).

4.2 Links Between the G9 and the Authorities

Sources report that the armed wing of President Moïse's administration was the G9 (ACLED Feb. 2021, 16) or Jimmy Cherizier (RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 81). According to AyiboPost and Connectas,

[translation]

the creation of the G9 was supported by the [CNDDR], created in 2006 and reactivated by Moïse in 2019. Jean Rebel Dorcenat, one of the members of this commission, stated on a radio show that he

had suggested that the gangs consolidate. According to him, this made things easier for the CNDDR, which would have only one party to deal with. This new federation of gangs would bring peace after a number of massacres in working-class neighbourhoods, attributed to armed gangs in Port-au-Prince. (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021])

According to sources, the G9 sought to consolidate electoral support for the Moïse administration in neighbourhoods considered to support the opposition (ACLED Feb. 2021, 14; *The Washington Post* 14 Aug. 2020). According to a Reuters report, Jimmy Cherizier organized a protest in March 2021 in support of the Moïse administration (Reuters 19 May 2021). Sources report that Jovenel Moïse had stated that he had no ties to gangs (*The Washington Post* 14 Aug. 2020; Reuters 19 May 2021).

According to sources published in 2020, the G9 is involved in political decision-making, including appointments (CARDH 22 July 2020, para. 5) and dismissals (RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 84). According to the RNDDH,

[RNDDH English version]

Many officers belonging to specialized units of the PNH including the General Security Unit of the National Palace ([l'Unité de Sécurité générale du Palais national,] USGPN), the Departmental Unit for the Maintenance of Order ([Unité départementale pour le Maintien de l'ordre,] UDMO), the [Departmental Operation and Intervention Brigade] ([Brigade d'Opération et d'Intervention départementale,] BOID) and the Intervention Corps for the Maintenance of Order ([Corps d'Intervention pour le Maintien de l'ordre,] CIMO) have sworn allegiance to Jimmy CHERIZIER aka Barbecue. They are paid exorbitant [sums] for services rendered.

... The General Inspection of the PNH, very lax, closes its eyes to the numerous excesses of police officers who protect armed gangs and maintain good relations with Jimmy CHERIZIER alias Barbecue. For example, on April 1, 2020, when the police institution claim[ed] to be looking for Jimmy CHERIZIER alias Barbecue, he [gave] instructions for him to participate in a distribution of food ... (RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 99 and 100, emphasis in original)

Some sources report that the G9 openly demonstrates in the streets of Port-au-Prince, as in July 2020 (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]) [or in June 2020 (*The Washington Post* 14 Aug. 2020)] to seek legal recognition from the state (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]).

5. State Protection

According to sources, criminal gangs enjoy impunity (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]; HRW 13 Jan. 2021). However, a report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate notes the arrest of 51 gang members and 53 suspected kidnappers between June and September 2020 (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 17). Another report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate notes the arrest of 169 gang members in January and February 2020 and 232 in March and April of the same year (UN 15 June 2020, para. 12). The February 2021 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate states that internal investigations are being conducted into 70 suspected Fantom 509 operatives (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 27). Information indicating whether charges had been laid against the individuals arrested or under investigation could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A Reuters article reports that Moïse had stated in April 2021 that the fight against insecurity has been "ineffective" (Reuters 26 Apr. 2021). According to AyiboPost and Connectas, while police operations

were launched against criminal groups in late 2020, [translation] "the strategy does not seem to be working" (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]).

The Director of Défenseurs plus stated that the deterioration of the security situation is [translation] "totally" beyond the control of de facto Prime Minister Ariel Henry (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). UN News also reports that the country is experiencing [UN English version] "political uncertainty" with an "institutional vacuum," that the country has been without a functioning parliament for more than two years, and that the justice sector is "almost completely paralyzed" since the assassination of Jovenel Moïse (UN 16 June 2022). According to the RNDDH, [RNDDH English version] "no mechanism has been put in place to prevent the expansion of armed gangs or to control the entry of firearms and ammunition into the country" (RNDDH 3 Feb. 2022, para. 35).

5.1 PNH

Sources note that the PNH lacks resources and personnel (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 26; IHRC and OHCCCH Apr. 2021, 10; Reuters 19 May 2021). However, a report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate states that, in order to combat gangs, the PNH budget received a [UN English version] "significant" increase in September 2020 for the first time since 2007 (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 17). Other sources report that the PNH also lacks legitimacy among the Haitian population (ACLED Feb. 2021, 15; UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 26; Reuters 19 May 2021). However, the US OSAC 2020 *Crime and Safety Report* states that the public places "a higher level of trust" in the PNH than in other government organizations (US 29 Apr. 2020).

According to various sources, the PNH is suspected of collusion with criminal groups (IHRC and OHCCCH Apr. 2021, 10; Reuters 19 May 2021; RNDDH 23 June 2020, para. 99–100). The February 2021 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate highlights human rights violations committed by law enforcement officials:

[UN English version]

From 1 September 2020 to 31 January 2021, BINUH documented 81 human rights violations by officers of the [PNH], resulting in 12 people killed (including 1 girl) and 25 injured (including 2 women) ... The General Inspectorate of the Haitian National Police [Inspection générale de la Police nationale d'Haïti, IGPNH] opened 122 investigations into alleged acts of misconduct by police officers, 22 of which were later closed, leading to the adoption of administrative sanctions in 16 cases, of which 4 were transmitted to judicial authorities. Moreover, the General Inspectorate investigated 68 additional violations related to incidents that occurred prior to the period covered by the present report. In 14 instances, it recommended sanctions. Notably, only two of those cases were transmitted to judicial authorities ... (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 34)

Given the lack of public trust in the police, the same source reports instances of popular justice, such as lynchings, 20 cases of which were documented between 1 September 2020 and 31 January 2021 and went unpunished (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 34).

In March 2021, Moïse amended the state of emergency legislation to ensure national security and empower the government to take [translation] "all measures deemed useful" (*Le Nouvelliste* 17 Mar. 2021) or [translation] "competent authorities to mobilize any external, necessary support" (AlterPresse 17 Mar. 2021).

According to the Director of Défenseurs plus, it is still possible for victims of criminal groups to file a complaint with the PNH, but such complaints are [translation] "often" dismissed, notably because of a lack of means for a proper investigation or because some police officers avoid drawing attention to themselves by going after these groups who are sometimes better armed than they are, or even because some of these police officers are themselves complicit with these criminal groups (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

5.2 National Intelligence Agency (Agence nationale d'intelligence, ANI)

Sources report that Moïse created the ANI by presidential decree in November 2020; it was tasked with countering terrorism (CEPR 14 Dec. 2020; Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F2). According to the same sources, another decree expanded the definition of act of "terrorism" (CEPR 14 Dec. 2020; Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F2) to include extortion and the blocking of roads with barricades, a common practice for protesters (CEPR 14 Dec. 2020). AyiboPost and Connectas indicate that ANI members [translation] "answer only to the president" (AyiboPost and Connectas [Feb. 2021]). Freedom House reports that, according to human rights groups, the decrees

threaten residents' civil rights and the rule of law. Further, the decrees authorize the ANI to have total secrecy and to conduct surveillance at any time, even if there is no relevant ongoing investigation. ANI staff will be recruited from the [PNH] and from the military and will not be subject to legal proceedings without prior authorization from the president. (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F2)

5.3 Judiciary

According to sources, the Haitian judicial system is susceptible to pressure from the executive and legislative branches (US 30 Mar. 2021, 8–9; Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F1). Sources report that police arrested 18 (FJKL 8 Feb. 2021, 2–3) or 23 (*Le Nouvelliste* 9 Feb. 2021) individuals on 7 February 2021, including a Supreme Court (or Court of Cassation) judge (FJKL 8 Feb. 2021, 2–3; *Le Nouvelliste* 9 Feb. 2021), while three other Supreme Court judges were forced into retirement by the Moïse administration the next day (*Le Nouvelliste* 9 Feb. 2021).

Sources state that the judicial system also lacks oversight (US 30 Mar. 2021, 8–9; Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F1) and that "most" corrupt officials are not held accountable (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F1). According to the February 2021 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate, the judicial system is experiencing intermittent strikes, along with delays in court proceedings and the implementation of projects, including [UN English version] "the opening of 11 decentralized legal aid offices ... providing free legal assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population" (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 28–29, 36).

The information in the following paragraph was provided by the Director of Défenseurs plus:

The Haitian judicial system had been under the influence of criminal groups in recent years, but the situation has deteriorated further under the current administration of Ariel Henry. Criminal groups had never dared to organize an armed attack in broad daylight to control a courthouse, as in the case of the Village-de-Dieu gang that has occupied the Port-au-Prince Palace of Justice for a week now. Before the death of Jovenel Moïse, gangs had always exercised some control over the judiciary in Haiti, but in a [translation] "covert or indirect way." Criminal prosecution laws are poorly enforced or not enforced at all. Judicial proceedings are "at a near standstill," paralyzed in particular by gangs blocking certain courthouses (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

5.4 Detention Centres

According to Freedom House, the pretrial detention rate in 2020 represented 78 percent of the total incarcerated population (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F2). The February 2021 report on the implementation of the BINUH's mandate notes that Haitian prisons have an occupancy rate of 315 percent (UN 11 Feb. 2021, para. 24). According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020*, inmates are malnourished and have 8.6 square feet of space in some prisons and sleep in shifts in "many" prisons, due to lack of space (US 30 Mar. 2021, 4–5).

5.4.1 Croix-des-Bouquets Jailbreak

According to sources, a February 2021 jailbreak in the Port-au-Prince suburb of Croix-des-Bouquets led to the deaths of 25 people and the escape of 400 inmates (AFP 10 Mar. 2021; InsightCrime 8 Mar. 2021). According to sources, observers believe that the escape was planned with help from the authorities (AFP 10 Mar. 2021; Insight Crime 8 Mar. 2021) and that its purpose was to free criminal group leader Arnel Joseph, who was killed by police the day after the escape (Insight Crime 8 Mar. 2021). The same sources state that 59 or 87 of the inmates who escaped were recaptured by law enforcement (AFP 10 Mar. 2021), or that half were recaptured (Insight Crime 8 Mar. 2021). The RNDDH report on this topic also states that prison authorities heard rumours about the Croix-des-Bouquets prison escape before it happened and that there was a failure on the part of the guards, some of whom were complicit in the escape (RNDDH 1 Apr. 2021, 6, 20, 21). According to the Director of Défenseurs plus, the recaptured prisoners were never tried for this escape [translation] "because the justice system is at a near standstill and under gang influence" (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022). Sources also state that an escape attempt was made at the same prison in Croix-des-Bouquets in late December 2021, resulting in about 10 deaths (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022; AFP 3 Jan. 2022; HaïtiLibre 2 Jan. 2022). AFP reports that 10 prisoners and a police officer were killed, while 3 other police officers were seriously injured during the attempted escape (AFP 3 Jan. 2022). According to the Director of Défenseurs plus, the escape in early 2021 and the attempted escape at the end of that year were both organized by gangs, with the complicity of prison guards (Défenseurs plus 17 June 2022).

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.

Note

[1] The International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) at Harvard Law School [translation] "seeks to protect and promote human rights and international humanitarian law," and the Observatoire haïtien des crimes contre l'humanité (OHCCH) is a "consortium of Haitian civil society organizations and prominent leaders ... with a mission of monitoring human rights violations in Haiti" (IHRC and OHCCH Apr. 2021, 2).

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Associated documents

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Haiti

Query response on Haiti: Security situation and criminal groups (2020 - June 2022)

Haïti : information sur la situation sécuritaire et sur les groupes criminels, y compris le Groupe des 9 (G9) [aussi appelé le G9 en famille et en alliés (an fanmi e alye)], y compris leurs activités, particulièrement les enlèvements et le recrutement des jeunes, leurs zones d'opération, leurs cibles, leur structure et leurs dirigeants; information sur les liens entre les groupes criminels et les politiciens; protection offerte par l'État (2020–juin 2022) [HTI201064.F] (Response, French)

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