

# HAITI ON THE BRINK: ASSESSING U.S. POLICY TOWARD A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

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## HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, AND TRADE OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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## **HAITI ON THE BRINK: ASSESSING U.S. POLICY TOWARD A COUNTRY IN CRISIS**

**Tuesday, December 10, 2019**

**House of Representatives,  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere,  
Civilian Security and Trade,  
Committee on Foreign Affairs,**

*Washington, DC*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Albio Sires (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SIRES [presiding]. Good morning, everyone.

This hearing will come to order. This hearing, titled “Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis,” will focus on U.S. policy toward Haiti and whether it is advancing our strategic objectives and contributing to peace and institutional strengthening in the country.

Without objection, all members might have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous material for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

I will now make an opening statement and, then, turn it over to the ranking member for his opening statement.

Good morning, everyone, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

This hearing comes at a critical time for Haiti. For much of the past year, that country has been gripped by a political and economic crisis. Many factors are contributing to this concerning situation.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with nearly 60 percent of Haitians living on less than \$2 a day. Increasing inflation and rising cost of living have made life even more difficult for many Haitians already struggling to get by.

At the same time, the administration of President Jovenel Moise has been unable to form a government, and the legislature has rejected his last two nominees for Prime Minister. Scheduled elections did not take place in October, creating the real possibility that the Chamber of Deputies will dissolve in January and President Moise will be ruling by decree.

Yet, the street demonstrations have been seen in Haiti and appear to reflect even deeper discontent. It seems that the Haitian people have had enough of political elites who they feel do not represent them and advocate for their own interests.

I hear this frustration. As someone who is deeply engaged in our hemisphere and who wants the best for Haiti, I believe it is com-

pletely unacceptable that some Haitian politician leaders are living lavishly while the people continue to suffer.

I note that, for many Haitian people, corruption is not an abstract concept. Corruption helps explain why half of the country is undernourished. Corruption contributes to Haiti's extremely low adult literacy rate of just 60 percent, and corruption tells an important part of the story behind the roads that still have not been replaced following the devastating earthquake in 2010. In other words, the funds stolen by government officials through the PetroCaribe program did not merely disappear into thin air. These were dollars that should have been used to improve people's lives and were, instead, used to line the pockets of the political powerful. With today's hearing, I want to send a clear message to the Haitian people that members of the U.S. Congress recognize this profound injustice.

This hearing is also about assessing U.S. policy and foreign assistance programs. I know that we have dedicated staff working for USAID and the State Department in Haiti who are trying to help improve the situation in the country, but I believe we need to think critically about how we can better support the Haitian people.

For instance, I am very worried about the human rights situation in the country. I urge the State Department to push for full investigations into the Saline massacre last year and allegation of excessive use of force against protesters in recent months.

It is clear to me that a prosperous and fully democratic Haiti is in the United States' best interest. Moreover, the United States relationship with the Haitian people is not a one-way street. We know that Haitian-Americans and Haitian-born residents living in the United States provide a crucial support for their home country and lift up our economies as well.

That is part of why I have consistently defended Temporary Protected Status for Haitians. I want to thank my good friend, Senator Menendez, for issuing a report last month that highlighted the contributions of 56,000 Haitian TPS holders who have been living in our country and strengthening our economies. I will continue to work with my colleagues to defend TPS for Haitians. I will also work to protect the United States taxpayers' resources.

It is for this reason that I will continue to oppose any effort to use U.S. assistance for funding the Haitian military, which is unnecessary and diverts resources away from the National Police. I appreciate Congressman Levin's leadership on this and his deep engagement with Haiti.

I hope that this hearing enables us to have an honest discussion about the extent to which our current policy is helping combat corruption, tackle poverty, and promote human rights and the rule of law in Haiti. And I look forward to a bipartisan conversation about what more can be done to help the Haitian people. Thank you.

And I now turn to the ranking member, who is not here, but he just showed up—so, this is what we call perfect timing in Congress—my good friend, Ted Yoho from Florida.

Mr. YOH0. I apologize for being late to everybody.

Thank you for being here.

Mr. Chairman, since its transition from dictatorship to democracy in 1987, Haiti has struggled with political instability, extreme

poverty, corruption, and other endemic challenges that have hindered its growth and prosperity. According to the World Bank, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. It had a GDP per capita of \$870 in 2018 and ranked 168 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index. Nearly 60 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line; 24 percent make less than \$1.23 per day.

While the extreme poverty is largely a product of corruption and inept governance, devastating environmental disasters have also contributed, such as the 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, which caused damage in Haiti equal to 32 percent of the country's GDP.

The United States is committed to supporting the Haitian people and has a vested interest in seeing a prosperous and stable democracy in Haiti. Further, Haiti recognizes interim President Juan Guaido as the leader of Venezuela and maintains relationships with Taiwan, and should be commended for doing so.

However, recent events in the country highlight the continued fragility of Haiti's democracy. During current President Moise's tenure, the country has seen widespread unrest and allegations of government corruption that have resulted in the resignation of two Prime Ministers and widespread calls for the President's resignation. However, the President has refused to step down, and sectors of the government have ground to a halt.

For example, Haitian legislators have blocked efforts to confirm the new Prime Minister and foiled multiple attempts to ratify the government. This has led to increased social unrest, demonstrations resulting in the death of more than 42 people and hundreds injured. Further, the lack of electoral law threatens to force the dissolution of Congress and the continued postponement of an election is very concerning.

The United States remains a major donor of foreign assistance to Haiti. In Fiscal Year 2019, the U.S. provided \$139.8 million in assistance and the Trump Administration's Fiscal Year request included \$145.5 million in assistance. This assistance is focused on emergency food aid and distribution, global health programs, education, and security.

Further, the United Nations has a continued presence over the last 15 years. Various U.N. initiatives have focused on restoring order and building Haitian National Police into a professional police force of over 14,000 officers in charge of domestic security. However, the police remain underfunded and are in need of continued support. The U.N.'s Mission for Justice and Support in Haiti, which replaced a larger peacekeeping mission in 2017, sought to strengthen judicial institutions and protect human rights. In 2019, the United Nations transitioned its mandate to an integrated office in Haiti to advise the government on strengthening political stability and good governance through an inclusive national dialog.

Going forward, the United States must continue to support the Haitian people and work toward economic prosperity, democratic stability, and respect for human rights. We want a peaceful and inclusive resolution to the political crisis and urge all sides to respect the rule of law and the Haitian constitution. At the same time, the Haitian government has a responsibility to be responsive to the

needs of the Haitian people and investigate all reports of human rights violations.

I look forward to this hearing. Here we are in the 21st century. I have people come into my office in Gainesville, Florida, from Haiti that are in pharmacy school, and we talk about the situation in Haiti. He wants to graduate in pharmacy and go back to help rebuild Haiti. We were talking about water. He said less than 20 percent of the people in Haiti have potable water. This is unacceptable. We are in the 21st century in the Western Hemisphere. It is not from a lack of resources. It is from a lack of people that get elected or put into office that will not put the people of Haiti first. They put themselves first, and this is something that has to change. I would hope in the Western Hemisphere we would all come together to make this a fruition and reality.

With that, I yield back and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you, Ranking Member.

I want to welcome at this time Congresswoman Barbara Lee from California and Congresswoman Frederica Wilson from Florida. Thank you.

And we will now go to our panel. I will now introduce Mr. Pierre Esperance, Executive Director of the Haitian National Human Rights Defense Network. As a leading human rights defender in Haiti, Mr. Esperance has worked with the National Human Rights Defense Network since 1995 to promote human rights, rule of law, and government accountability in Haiti. In 2002, he was awarded the Human Rights Award from the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince.

Mr. Esperance, we welcome you. Thank you.

We will then hear from Ms. Emmanuela Douyon. Ms. Douyon is an economist and a leader of the PetroChallenge and Nou Pap Domi social movement demanding greater government accountability and transparency in the wake of PetroCaribe scandal.

Ms. Douyon, thank you for joining us today.

We will then hear from Mr. Daniel Erikson, Managing Director of Blue Star Strategies and Senior Fellow at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement. He previously served as a special advisor to Vice President Biden and as a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of State.

Mr. Erikson, thank you for joining us.

We will then hear from Ms. Leonie Marie Hermantin. Born in Haiti, Ms. Hermantin grew up in New York City and holds a Juris Doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley and a Master's degree in urban environmental planning. She is the Director of Development, Communications, and Strategic Planning at Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center, an organization focused on supporting south Florida's Haitian community.

Ms. Hermantin, thank you.

Finally, we will hear from Dr. Antonio Garrastazu, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the International Republican Institute. Dr. Garrastazu manages programs and initiatives across 16 countries in the hemisphere focused on governance, legislative strengthening, political inclusion, and election integrity. He holds a Bachelor's degree in history and political science from



the University of Florida, as well as a Master's and Doctorate in international studies from the University of Miami.

Dr. Garrastazu, thank you for being here.

I ask the witnesses to please limit your testimony to 5 minutes, and without objection, your prepared written statements will be made a part of the record.

Mr. Esperance, you and your interpreter will be allowed 10 minutes to provide the subcommittee with simultaneous translation.

This is the first time we are doing this. Will you please tell him that?

Non-committee members will also be joining us in this hearing. Without objection, I ask for unanimous consent, so that the Members of Congress who are not members of this subcommittee may be recognized to participate in the hearing and question the witnesses after subcommittee members have had the opportunity to do so. Do I hear unanimous consent?

Mr. YOHO. No objection.

Mr. SIRES. Okay. Mr. Esperance, I now turn to you.

**STATEMENT MR. PIERRE ESPERANCE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
HAITIAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENSE NETWORK**

Mr. ESPERANCE. [Mr. Esperance speaks through a translator.] Chairman Sires and all the members of the committee, we would like to thank you for this hearing that you have on the ongoing situation in Haiti. It has been 20 years, in fact, more than 20 years, since we have had a hearing on human rights issues in Haiti in Congress.

My name is Pierre Esperance and I am the Executive Director of RNDDH. RNDDH is a human rights organization that works on education, promotion, and also the monitoring of human rights in Haiti.

Amongst many pressing human rights validation issues in Haiti, I will highlight five of them. The first one would be the proliferation of armed gangs that are being protected by the State. Since 2018, the current administration in Haiti has used armed gangs to repress political dissent in Haiti. As a result, we have had at least five massacres in Haiti. The largest massacre was the one that was perpetrated in November 2018 in La Saline. Seventy-one people were killed during that massacre, children and adults. Eleven women were raped and at least 400 homes were destroyed. When you take the totality of these massacres, there has been at least 127 people that have been killed.

With the proliferation of gangs in security in Haiti, there has been also an increasing insecurity in the country. The gangs are, in fact, even better armed than the police itself. Just for this year, we have had 44 police officers that were killed.

Second, we have violence and repression against those who are demonstrating against the Haitian government. Since July 2018 to today, we have had at least 187 people that have been killed and 42 of those people were shot in the head.

Third, there is a politicization of the Haitian judicial system. For example, all cases that are implicating authorities, like the La Saline case and the PetroCaribe case, they are all blocked by the judicial system. The authorities use the judicial system to persecute

the opposition members. For instance, there has been arbitrary arrests of protesters.

Fourth is the question of pretrial detention. Seventy-four percent of people are still awaiting trial from the prison population. The prison population can only accommodate about 3,000 people. But, in fact, today we have more than 11,000 people who are imprisoned.

Fifth is the non-respect of constitutional process. The Haitian authorities were supposed to have elections that were scheduled for October of this year, October 2019. The elections did not take place for the following reasons: the President did not use his majority empowerment to pass an electoral law or a budget. And they also introduced a new national ID card that was illegally done. It is illegal because this was not approved either by parliament, by the legislators, or by the National Court of Auditors.

As a result, in January of next year, January 2020, the Haitian parliament will no longer exist and the President will be able to rule only by decree. It is a very concerning issue for the Haitian population because the country, the Nation is involved in corruption; also, in systematic violation of human rights, and also in its support for gangs.

Considering all the situations that we are going through right now in Haiti, the Haitian population is asking for a resignation of the current government. Because of those reasons, we are asking the U.S. Congress to do the following:

- To encourage the Haitian authorities to stop arming and protecting the gangs;

- To stop politicizing the police and judicial institutions;

- To fight against contraband,

- And also, encourage Haitian authorities to provide information regarding PetroCaribe funds and, also, the massacres perpetrated since 2018, and to better explain the rationale behind the creation of the new national ID card.

- And also, for the U.S. authorities to monitor the illegal entry of arms and ammunition that are coming to Haiti.

Thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Esperance follows:]

**Written Testimony of Pierre Esperance  
Executive Director  
Haitian National Human Rights Defense Network (Réseau National de Défense des Droits  
Humains, RNDDH)**

Submitted to the  
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Hearing on “Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis”  
December 10, 2019

Interpretation conducted by Hyppolite Pierre

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, and other distinguished Members of the  
Subcommittee:

Thank you for holding this important hearing on the ongoing situation in Haiti. My name is Pierre Esperance, the Executive Director of the Haitian National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH), a human rights education and monitoring organization devoted to ensuring the protection of rights and the upholding of rule of law in Haiti, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today.

To begin, the general human rights situation in Haiti is characterized by a worrying security situation, the proliferation of armed gangs protected by the state – otherwise known as the gangsterization of the state, the dysfunction of the Haitian judiciary, impunity, corruption across all state institutions, the repression of anti-government demonstrations and the absence of any political will to find lasting solutions to the many problems facing the country.

***1. On insecurity***

Haiti faces severe security challenges that affect all Haitians. One major cause of concern is the ongoing gangsterization of the state. Currently, from the capital to provincial cities, Haiti is full of armed gangs that enjoy the protection of the executive and legislative powers. They regularly receive money and automatic firearms, and they never run out of ammunition. It is important to note that Haiti does not manufacture weapons or ammunition and that the country has been under an arms embargo for several years.

These armed gangs bolster the political interests of their protectors by attacking the population, especially in neighborhoods known as strongholds of political opposition that support anti-government demonstrations.

The Moise administration's use of armed gangs to repress political dissent began in 2018. As a result, armed gangs, with the protection of government authorities, have carried out five massacres over the course of President Jovenel Moise's administration. The deadliest of these massacres is that of La Saline, where at least 71 people, including women and children, were killed, and over 400 homes were destroyed in November 2018. On November 6, 2018, a meeting was held to prepare the massacre where weapons and ammunition were distributed to gang members. This meeting was attended by the then Director General of the Ministry of the Interior and Collective Territories and the then Departmental Delegate. During the La Saline Massacre, people were ripped out of their beds to be chopped up with machetes. Others were shot while trying to flee. The victims' bodies were burnt and thrown into pig sty's to be eaten by pigs. Women were gang-raped in front of their children.

Throughout these massacres, rape is used as a weapon of war. In total, 127 people were killed during these five massacres, with the overall goal of sowing terror in the communities and silencing the population and their demands for improving their living conditions.

Yet, this strategy of terrorizing communities has not stopped anti-government protests so the Ministry of the Interior and Collective Territories, several Departmental delegations, as well as the Secretary of State for Public Security have been providing the ability for the Haitian National Police officers to use rubber bullets, tear gas, and lethal weapons on protesters.

From July 2018 to the present day, at least 187 protesters, during protests or while leaving protests, have been murdered and at least 42 have been shot in the head, execution-style.

Several Haitian human rights organizations, Amnesty International, and the UN have reported on these security challenges with evidence of unnecessary and excessive force being used on the public.

Due to the widespread proliferation of protected armed gangs across the country, security outside of protests is also increasingly precarious and respect for life is dismal. No day goes by without at least one bullet shot being recorded. Police officers are overwhelmed by this situation and are also killed by gang members who are much better armed than them. For example, from January to November 2019, at least 478 people have been shot or stabbed. Of these, at least 44 police officers and at least 2 journalists lost their lives. Another 30 press workers were physically and/or verbally assaulted.

## ***2. On the dysfunction of the Haitian judiciary and the rights to judicial guarantees***

Haiti's Judiciary requires urgent reform as it is currently completely dysfunctional. This dysfunction has gotten worse with numerous work stoppages of magistrates, clerks and bailiffs who demand better working conditions. The Judiciary does not have the means to function, as they receive less than one percent of the national budget. The executive and the legislative arms have divided the country's budget amongst themselves, while the needs of the judiciary are not considered. The executive and the legislative arms do not consider the judicial branch as an independent and equal power.

As a result, judicial rights are constantly trampled on. For example, as of November 15, 2019, 11,069 people are incarcerated, of which 74.21 percent, or 8,219 people, of the incarcerated population are awaiting a trial with only 25.79 percent, or 2,855 people, having been sentenced.

Moreover, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for litigants who have no connection with political authorities to have access to justice. Increasingly, citizens are witnessing the Executive politicize the Haitian Judiciary to solve its political problems. While some cases stagnate for years, others move quickly in the same judicial system, this violates the judicial rights of the population. For example the cases of people close to the administration are expedited so that the people are exonerated before the public has time to react. In comparison, the cases around the state sanctioned massacres, in general, are not progressing. Judges close to the government are hand selected to hear cases involving government officials, partisans and sympathizers. For example, the investigating judge called upon to conduct the judicial investigation against the people and intuitions charged with embezzling the PetroCaribe funds is close to the current administration President Moise is not renewing the mandates of judges who are known to be honest and independent. For example, Jean Wilner Morin, the President of the Association of Haitian Judges (ANAMAH), who has a longstanding reputation for his independence, excellent work and honesty, is experiencing this. Mr. Morin's mandate expired in December 2018 and it still has not be renewed as of December 2019. In contrast, President Moise is nominating and renewing the mandates of judges who are not independent.

We also see the protection of gangs. For example, the leaders of one of the largest armed gangs involved in kidnappings– Woodly Etheart, also known as Sonson La Familia, and Renel Nelfort, also known as Renel the Reef – are protected despite the fact that at the highest judicial court ordered that they be arrested and appear before the court.

In essence, government impunity has become a normal part of the judicial system.

### ***3. On the General Conditions of Detention***

The conditions of detention are in fact akin to torture; 74.21 percent of the prison population is awaiting trial, thousands of these individuals have been incarcerated for years in a prison space that currently accommodates 11,069 but was designed to accommodate 3,000 people.

In addition to the inhuman and degrading conditions, prison authorities do not take into account the safety of women in detention. For example recently, there was a mutiny in a national prison where 10 of the 12 women incarcerated were gang-raped by male inmates.

#### ***4. On the absence of government and the breakdown of the constitutional order***

In April 2019, President Jovenel Moïse forced Jean Henry Ceant, the Prime Minister of Haiti, out of his office. For Haitian civil society, this resignation was received with indifference because the population had already clearly shared with the President that their demand is for him to resign and make himself available to judicial authorities, in order to address his direct implication in the PetroCaribe corruption.

Since then, President Moïse has been unable to establish a new government even with a majority in Parliament because the political opposition and civil society are demanding his resignation. However, they are not demanding the replacement of other members of his government.

Meanwhile, members of Haitian parliament, who have been unproductive for several years, have also been implicated in several corruption scandals. For example, the executive and legislative arms engage in nepotism. They often appoint judges and disregard the rules for appointment within the judiciary bodies. This is a violation of the principle of judicial independence. They also agree to form governments, each of which is then allowed to appoint a relative.

In several cases there are parliamentarians who control government ministries where they appoint and fire employees, and, once they control the Ministries, they are then able to siphon money from the Ministries. They often use fictitious development programs that on paper will benefit their district or regional department, but where in reality are used to embezzle money from the program. Corners are cut and program costs are inflated. Additionally, the management of some Haitian Ministries and agencies of the state, including the National Old Age Insurance Office, the National Port Authority, and the National Airport Authority, among others, are controlled by specific parliamentarians or those close to the government. These politically tied managers then are empowered to regularly demand the payment of large sums of money from the coffers of these state agencies – stealing funds that are meant to benefit the entire population.

We have seen Parliamentary corruption also in overcharging for commodities. For example, in November 2018, the Chamber of Deputies paid \$4,701 USD, or 456,000 gourdes – the local currency, for the purchase of eight bags of sugar and seventeen cases of coffee. By December

2018, the Chamber of Deputies paid \$29,598 USD, or 2,871,000 gourdes, for the same quantity of sugar and coffee.

The Haitian Parliament does not currently function as a legislative body working for the good of the Haitian people and does not exercise its power to control the government's actions.

Legislative elections, for members of parliament whose mandate ends in January 2020, were scheduled for October 2019. They were not held because Haiti still has no electoral budget or law, no current electoral list, no agreement on the constitution of the electoral council, and no political buy-in for elections. The president of Haiti's provisional electoral council has indicated that the technical, financial and political prerequisites for a free and fair election do not currently exist. As a result, on January 13, 2020, the Constitutional order will be broken, and the Haitian Parliament will be obsolete. This situation will allow the President to rule the country by decree. The President ruling by decree is enormously concerning for the Haitian population, especially given the administrations' current legacy of corruption, dismantling state institutions, perpetrating human rights abuses, and supporting the proliferation of gang violence.

The President did not use his party's majority in the Haitian Parliament to pass an electoral law. Of concern, he and his government have engaged in a process of issuing new national identification cards that will act as voting cards for the Haitian population. These new national IDs are illegal. The National Court of Auditor's has issued two contrary opinions. In one, they state that the need for the State to spend so much money on a similar process, when there are already existing national identification cards, is not warranted. Similarly, rumors of corruption mar the procurement process regarding the identifying and hiring of the service provider chosen to produce the new ID cards. Furthermore, a law sanctioning the replacement of the old card with the new one was given to the Parliament by the executive branch, but the law was never voted in. Ignoring all of the above, the Executive has nevertheless launched its process and now threatens to cancel the validity of the pre-existing national ID cards so that Haitians are forced to register for a new card.

This desire to provide citizens with a new identity document at all costs is a cause for concern because we fear this could allow for the manipulation of biometric and electoral data. The preexisting database has been under construction for 14 years, from 2005 to 2019, and the current administration hopes to regather this data in only a few months.

##### ***5. On the state's lifestyle and the living conditions of the population***

State authorities often live a life of luxury far beyond the means of a poor country. The national budget currently provides members of the legislative, executive and judicial branches, in addition to their salary, with many exorbitant privileges. These privileges include telephone fees, service vehicles, fees for renting a second residence, reception fees for dignitaries and debit cards that

are refilled monthly. As a result, the limited resources and income generated by the state are directed towards these operating expenses with almost no investment in national infrastructure and social services. National revenue, moreover, is dwindling every day, as the State has decided to abandon control of ports and borders to smuggling.

In contrast to the luxuries afforded state authorities, in 2014, according to the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Computer Science, 68.2 percent of the Haitian population lives in poverty, making less than one U.S. dollar a day. With 28.8 percent of the population living in extreme poverty, making less than 50 U.S. cents a day. Throughout 2019, Haiti has been experiencing a deteriorating economic situation that has seen a 37 percent devaluation in the gourde the past year and with inflation now estimated at 19 percent. As a result, the cost of staple food items and other basic necessities have increased and become unaffordable for Haitian families; as a result, poverty is becoming more and more severe.

Exacerbating this is the high rate of unemployment, which affects 70 percent of the working-age population. And, many of those who have employment do not receive a sufficient wage that allows them to support themselves. This is the case for both public schoolteachers and public doctors who only earn approximately \$10 a day.

Since September 2019, schools have been operating only in secret in Haiti due to protests and the ongoing socio-economic paralysis of the country. At the same time, for years, public school students have not had teachers in their classrooms. Meanwhile, public hospitals do not provide adequate services to the population. Often on strike to demand better working conditions, medical staff are overwhelmed by their working conditions that they deem unsanitary, insecure and devoid of basic equipment such as gloves, syringes, medicines, and other necessary medical items.

Social services are non-existent and failing. Social programs are now major corruption operations with zombie beneficiaries and overcharging of the products offered. For example, on August 28, 2017, the former Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Roosevelt Bellevue, was implicated in a scandal involving the overbilling of 50,000 school kits for distribution to schoolchildren. He was simply removed from office. Those who he worked with to create this machine of corruption are, to date, not worried of facing any legal charges.

In addition, the Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Litigation itself stated in its audit reports of the PetroCaribe funds published on January 31<sup>st</sup> and May 31<sup>st</sup> 2019, , that the majority of beneficiaries listed in the social assistance programs – including single mothers, distribution of food baskets, soup kitchens, and public university students – were never reached by these programs.



Today, at the time of this hearing, socio-economic activities have timidly resumed in Haiti. However, this should not be seen as a sign of progress as the problems of Haitians are not solved and the authorities concerned show no willingness to solve them.

#### ***6. On requests to the U.S. Congress***

This picture presents a very precarious political, economic, and social situation in Haiti, all of which are the results of public policies implemented by the current state authorities.

It is based on this analysis that Haitians today believe the United States Government should:

- Encourage Haitian leaders to end the gangsterization of the state, including the stop of arming and offering protection to gangs, and the politicization of police and judicial institutions;
- Encourage Haitian authorities to combat smuggling;
- Increase U.S. monitoring around the illegal export of arms and ammunition from the U.S. that bolster the widespread proliferation of armed gangs across Haiti;
- Encourage the Haitian state to stop undermining accountability efforts and provide information on:
  - files related to the (mis)management of the PetroCaribe funds,
  - the civilian massacres perpetrated since 2018,
  - and the creation of a new national ID, also known as the Dermalog case;
- Recognize publicly the legitimate demands of the current movement and its demands for: government accountability, an end to government impunity, respect for human rights and the consolidation of public spending - including assistance in strengthening anti-corruption institutions.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SIREs. Thank you very much.

Ms. Douyon.

**STATEMENT OF MS. EMMANUELA DOUYON, NOU PAP DOMI**

Ms. DOUYON. Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you all for the opportunity to speak about the ongoing situation in Haiti. This hearing is an important step in recognizing the ongoing challenges the country is facing, and I look forward to sharing the perspectives of Nou Pap Domi with you today.

For the past 18 months, the Haitian population has engaged in massive nationwide protests demanding increased government accountability. A movement called PetroChallenge emerged with two main grievances: government impunity and government corruption. This accountability movement is fueled by reports from both the Senate and the Court of Auditors outlining the misappropriation of an estimated \$3.8 billion from the PetroCaribe fund. Successive Haitian administrations and officials have been implicated, including sitting President Moise.

The response to the nationwide accountability movement has been varied. There are attempts to undermine accountability efforts. None of the officials implicated in the PetroCaribe corruption scandal have been held judicially accountable.

Violence is used against protesters. Amnesty International's October report called on the government to protect the rights of protesters. There are attacks on the press. Journalists reporting on corruption and the popular movement have received threats and come under attack. Some even lost their lives.

Armed gangs and State officials massacre civilians. They do this to repress dissent in neighborhoods such as La Saline and Bel Air. No one has faced charges for these crimes.

This is a latent crisis that has finally exploded. Haitians, PetroChallengers, in particular, are committed to fighting corruption which is robbing them of the future. Besides, the economic situation in Haiti has worsened during Moise's presidency. Armed gangs that enjoy the protection of State officials proliferate. There is a consensus that Haiti's governmental system is broken and must be transformed to actually foster social equity and inclusion. Citizens from all sectors of civil society in both rural and urban areas are calling for the President to step down.

To date, the U.S. Administration has largely stood by the Moise government. The U.S. has been recommending dialogs since 2018, but the implication of high-level officials in acts of corruption and human rights violation has thwarted their legitimacy to lead national dialogs. Besides, the demand of the population is for systemic change.

The U.S. has recommended the formation of a new government, but it is morally difficult to encourage citizens to work with a President that has been indicted in corruption. President Moise has already formed two governments during his 2 years in office. The reshuffling of the cabinet will not resolve the current crisis.

The U.S. called to organize an election, but Haitian citizens see election as problematic and exclusionary within the current context. After the needed systematic reforms, organization elections is

a priority for the transitional government. Haitian youth and civil society groups are willing to engage in the electoral process more actively in order to influence change.

Moving forward, it appears increasingly likely that the President will not be able to complete his term. In January, the President will rule by decree without a legitimate Prime Minister and a parliament. This is a serious governance imbalance that raises several concerns. Many political actors and civil society organizations are collaborating to define a roadmap for the political transition.

As of now, the international community does not support a political transition, but they must listen to the legitimate demand of the Haitian people. If the U.S. wants to support a sustainable way forward for Haiti, it must finally take its lead from Haitian civil society and support systemic reform. Corrupt officials cannot fight against corruption. The U.S. failure to stand with the legitimate demand of the current movement provides political cover for government corruption and impunity. That further undermines the right of the population, democracy, the rule of law, and stability. The U.S.'s decades-long focus on short-term stability over rule of law has failed and must be reevaluated.

Thanks for your time. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Douyon follows:]

**Written Testimony of Emmanuela Douyon  
Nou Pap Domi**

Submitted to the  
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Hearing on "Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis"  
December 10, 2019

**Haiti's Crisis: From a civic push for accountability to demand systemic change**

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to speak about the ongoing situation in Haiti. This hearing is an important step in recognizing the ongoing challenges the country is facing, and I look forward to sharing the perspectives of Nou Pap Domi with you today.

**Haitian Government's Response & Deterioration of Economic and Social Justice**

For the past 18 months, the Haitian population have engaged in massive nationwide protests demanding increased government accountability. Demonstrations erupted in July 2018 after the Moise-Lafontant government followed the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) recommendation and decided to end the fuel subsidy. Shortly after, a movement called Petro Challenge emerged. The movement has two main grievances: government impunity and government corruption, which prevent progress toward a just society. The current accountability movement was sparked by Senate reports outlining the misappropriation of an estimated US\$3.8 billion from a Venezuela-backed oil loan program, also known as PetroCaribe, that has implicated successive Haitian administrations and officials, including sitting President Jovenel Moise. Funds were taken to finance projects that were either not finished or never started. What began as a small-scale appeal for the government response to the report findings has grown into a national movement for accountability and systemic change.

The PetroCaribe fund was designed to provide oil at a discounted rate to Haiti and enable national savings that could be invested in strengthening critical infrastructure and social services. After the Senate reports, the government requested that the Haitian Court of Auditors conduct their own analysis. The Court of Auditors published two reports echoing many of the same problems identified by the Senate.

The response to the nationwide accountability movement from government institutions and agencies has been varied:

- **Undermining accountability efforts:** The implication of so many high-level officials in and close to this government in acts of corruption has thwarted accountability at every level of government. None of the officials implicated in the PetroCaribe corruption scandal have been held judicially accountable. The Senate, predominantly PHTK, the party of the President and his allies, obstructed PetroCaribe-related investigations by blocking a vote on the Senate Committee report for four months. Senators with the majority party then passed a resolution condemning the Senate report as politically-motivated in a clandestine session convened after opposition senators had left the building. This resolution referred the dossier to the Superior Court of Auditors and Administration (CSCCA). The Court of Auditors published two serious, but incomplete, reports in January and May of 2019. Many state entities denied cooperation with the Court of Auditors; judges of the court have received death threats. The government institutions responsible for fighting corruption are being dismantled. President Moïse unlawfully fired the director of UCREF, the financial crimes unit that produced an investigative report during the 2016 elections implicating President Moïse in money laundering and replaced him with an unlawful “interim” director more favorable to Moïse. The new Parliament dominated by President Moïse’s allies then passed a law that granted the executive de facto control over the entity, greatly undermining its independence. President Moïse also pushed out the UN’s chief officer in Haiti after she spoke out on corruption in 2018.
- **Violence against protesters:** From July 2018 to the present day, the Haitian National Police (HNP) has met largely, non-violent protests with a repressive response. In Amnesty International’s October 2019 report, they called on President Jovenel Moïse to guarantee the rights of Haitians who are taking to the streets to protest against his government, and to put an end to the use of excessive force by his security forces. In the most recent report, Amnesty verified multiple instances of “security forces under the command of President Jovenel Moïse” using unlawful and excessive force. Amnesty said it also verified instances in which police, armed with semi-automatic rifles, fired live ammunition during protests, in violation of international human rights law and standards on the use of force.
- **Attacks on the press:** Journalists reporting on corruption and the popular movement have received threats and come under attack, by both police and protestors. In September, the Committee to Protect Journalists condemned the shooting of journalist Chery-Dieu-Nalio, who was injured after a senator fired a shot in the air near the Senate building. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, Néhémie Joseph, a reporter covering the movement for Radio Méga, was found shot dead in his car.

- Massacre of civilians to repress political dissent:** Armed gangs have carried out massacres in neighborhoods known as strongholds of political opposition that support anti-government demonstrations. Credible investigations by Haitian human rights organizations, the national judicial police, and the UN point to government involvement in a massacre in the La Saline neighborhood, where at least 71 people were brutally murdered, and hundreds of houses were burned by armed gangs in November 2018. La Saline is a key convening spot for anti-government protests, and the massacre took place after a massive anti-corruption protest had taken place the month prior and while another protest was being planned for November 18, 2018. Despite the scale and horror of the atrocities, the current administration has yet to formally start legal proceedings against those implicated in the La Saline case. This sends a clear signal that the massacre is not a priority for this government. Moreover, aligned with the one-year anniversary of the La Saline Massacre, from November 4 to 7, 2019, armed attacks against the inhabitants of the Bel-Air community resulted in fifteen people killed and twenty-one houses burnt.

These dangerous government responses, frustration from the population, deplorable living conditions, and the deteriorating economic performance of Haiti have led to the current political, social and economic crisis. The economic situation in Haiti has worsened throughout Jovenel Moïse's presidency – with a 37 percent devaluation in the gourde over the past year and, in July 2019, the inflation rate was recorded at 19.10 percent. The Haitian people are also victims of increased levels of banditry. There is a proliferation of armed gangs that work for and enjoy the protection of state officials.

The ongoing protests demanding government accountability coupled with the population's notable lack of support for either the current administration or the political opposition demonstrates a growing consensus that Haiti's governmental system is fundamentally broken and must be transformed into a system that actually fosters social equity and inclusion. The current crisis is due to a broken political and economic system that has failed to serve the population, create functional public institutions, protect human rights or provide social services and opportunities to the citizens of Haiti.

Based on the current administration's weakening of state institutions, undermining of accountability efforts, corruption, ongoing human rights violations, failure to form a government despite a majority in the Parliament, inability or lack of desire to fight gang proliferation, extreme poverty, hyperinflation, disintegration of public service, unemployment and the general economic deterioration of the country, Haitian citizens recognize that this administration does not have the political will or capacity to transform Haiti's governmental system into one that actually serves the Haitian people. As a result,

citizens from all sectors of civil society, in both rural and urban areas, are calling for the President to step down. Corrupt officials cannot fight corruption.

#### **A Latent Crisis Has Finally Exploded**

The current generation of Haitians, the Petro Challengers, in particular, are committed to the fight against corruption. They were in their twenties when they lost their loved ones, hopes, and dreams in the devastating 2010 earthquake. This generation is marked by the biggest natural disaster the country ever faced, followed by a cholera outbreak, and another major hurricane in 2016. Haitian hopes were high that the country would rebuild after the earthquake in 2010. But years later, there was great disappointment when they realized that very little was achieved with all the money that was supposed to rebuild the country and finance development projects. Many promises have been made, but the country has only become poorer while a group of politicians and businessmen are getting rich on the backs of the people. Kleptocracy and state capture were in full effect. The country is characterized by high inequalities, endemic corruption, impunity, and social injustice. It was clear that as inequality and poverty increased a crisis would explode, as everyone had had enough. It was only a matter of time.

#### **Assessing Current U.S. Response**

To date, the U.S. administration has largely stood by the Moïse government calling for:

**Dialogue:** The US has been recommending dialogue since 2018, but it has not worked for several reasons. The implication of so many high-level officials in and close to this government in acts of corruption and human rights violations has thwarted their legitimacy to lead national dialogues. President Moïse has lacked a popular mandate from the beginning of his term and he has only further alienated Haitians through economic mismanagement and violent abuses of authority. The Haitian society is calling for an inclusive National Conference, which would include all sectors of society and be facilitated by the transitional government. This is not a political crisis between those who won the last election and those who did not; this crisis goes beyond political opposition. The demand of the Petro challengers and the population is for systemic change dialogues.

**A new government:** The recommendation to form a new government is noble, but it is morally difficult to encourage citizens to work with a president that has been indicted in corruption, weakened state institutions, undermined accountability efforts, been unresponsive to ongoing human rights violations, failed to form a government despite a majority in the parliament, failed to fight gang proliferation and been unable to address the general economic deterioration of the country. President Moïse has already formed two governments during his two years in office. The reshuffling of the cabinet will not resolve

the current crisis. Protesters are demanding systemic reforms to increase government accountability and responsiveness and to reign in widespread impunity for corruption and human rights violations that this administration is incapable of executing. The key actors from the opposition, whether a political party or civil society, have had a negative experience with the President, particularly the way he handles dialogue. At this point, they won't be willing to cancel their demands for him to resign to form a government with him.

**Elections:** Haiti's political crisis can be traced back to the electoral process that brought President Moïse into power. President Moïse was elected in 2016 in the lowest voter turnout elections since the end of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1987. The Presidential elections took place during an election cycle characterized by fraud and violence. Fraud in the first Presidential elections forced a redo. The second time, only about 20% of the eligible population voted due to a combination of disenfranchisement and disillusionment with the electoral system. President Moïse received only 600,000 votes in a country of 10 million people. While the international community has invested billions in building up rule of law institutions in Haiti, powerful governments and international institutions have also exerted influence on Haiti to forge ahead with problematic and exclusionary elections, such as the one described above. Without a popular mandate to govern, President Moïse has had to rely on patronage by diverting funds from the treasury and from social programs to maintain a network of supporters.

Haitian citizens remain disillusioned with elections as a means for change within the current context, but after the needed key systematic reforms, organizing elections is an identified priority of the transitional government. Haitian youth and civil society groups realize that they cannot abandon politics, especially as they do not believe in the old guard politicians – opposition or not. They are willing to engage in voter education, demand campaigns based on clear agendas and to run for office in order to influence change.

### **The Path Forward**

Given the development of the current situation, it appears increasingly likely that the President will not be able to complete his term, set to expire in early 2022. Many political actors and civil society organizations are already collaborating to define a roadmap for the political transition and the mandate of the transitional government. As of now, a political transition is not supported by the international community, including the U.S., but it is critical that they listen to the legitimate demands of the Haitian people.

We have seen how important it is to support Haitian demands. Ten years ago, after the earthquake, the world came to Haiti to implement projects that fit their missions and would help them achieve their national or organizational goals. Their projects did not fulfill the needs of the Haitian people on the ground. The results were suspicions of the



mismanagement of funds and a failed recovery. What we need now is support from the international community that matches the needs and supports the Haitian population's vision for their future. Given this, the following points are very important to keep in mind:

1. This time around, the complexities of the crisis won't be easily solved by short term interventions, such as food distribution, talks of forming a new government with a president indicted in corruption.
2. What's happening in Haiti today is different. The Petro challenge movement isn't the same old crisis between various political groups. The youth of Haiti have emerged and have decided to tackle one of the biggest problem the country has ever faced – corruption.
3. Haitian civil society has defined the principles of an inclusive transition as the following:
  - a. The selection of a transitional government via a process that is transparent and inclusive.
  - b. A National Conference that includes members of civil society. The National Conference will define a legally binding mandate, or road map, for the transitional government.
  - c. The creation of a diverse oversight and accountability entity to accompany the transitional government.

The mandate of the transitional government needs to include the following:

- a. The rationalization of public spending and reform of state institutions;
- b. The strengthening of anti-corruption bodies such as ULCC, UCREF, CSCCA;
- c. The creation of new mechanisms to ensure judicial independence;
- d. The holding of a trial regarding PetroCaribe corruption scandal.

#### **Requests for the U.S. Congress**

**Support the legitimate demands of the current movement:** If the U.S. wants to support a sustainable way forward for Haiti, it must finally take its lead from Haitian civil society and support systemic reform. Systemic reform is the only way for Haiti to emerge out of this crisis into a place of stability. There is a need to support for civic engagement of the Haitian people and systematic democratic reforms by encouraging accountability for corruption and rights abuses. The popular call for accountability can help advance a more stable, prosperous and rights-respecting democracy in Haiti. The USG's failure to stand with the legitimate demands of the current movement provides political cover for government impunity and in turn further undermines the rights of the population, democracy, rule of law and stability. The U.S.'s decades-long prioritization of short-term stability over rule of law has failed and must be re-examined.

I would like to thank you for your time and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Mr. Erikson, you are recognized.

**STATEMENT OF MR. DANIEL ERIKSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
BLUE STAR STRATEGIES**

Mr. ERIKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Yoho, for organizing this hearing and for your opening remarks, which I found to be quite wise. And I would also like to thank the other members of the committee and of Congress who are here today.

I will briefly address the current situation in Haiti, but the focus of my remarks will be on what the United States and the broader international community should do to address the Haitian crisis in 2020. When I was in Haiti last month, one thing became very clear: Haiti today is experiencing its most profound political, economic, and social crisis in a generation. And it will get worse next January, when the Congress dissolves, there is no political accord, the economy withers, security worsens, corruption remains unchecked, and millions will face emergency levels of food insecurity.

How did the Haiti crisis become so severe? I see three overlapping crises. The first is the decades-long struggle for Haiti to achieve a basic level of governability and a sustainable economy. The second crisis emerges from the development and decisions during the administration of President Jovenel Moise, who assumed office in February 2017, and the resulting political gridlock, the protests, and the country lockdown, or “peyi lock,” as it is known in Creole, that devastated the economy and jeopardized the well-being of millions of Haitians.

And all of this has occurred against the backdrop of a third crisis, a crisis of apathy and indifference among Haitians international allies and partners. This is a crisis of apathy that I believe this committee is best positioned to address.

Haiti has suffered periods of sharp deterioration before, coups, earthquakes, hurricanes, political unrest, and in virtually every instance the international community, led by the United States, has sought to identify core problems, work toward practical solutions, and reduce human suffering. Not every engagement has been successful, but important lessons have been learned.

The first is that, if the United States does not lead, no one else will step up to take our place.

Second, the results have been more successful and more sustainable when the U.S. has been joined by partners across the hemisphere as well as allies in Europe and key international institutions like the Organization of American States, the United Nations, and the multilateral development banks.

The third lesson is that, while Haiti will never achieve political consensus, political compromise can be obtainable, but only when the international community joins forces and Haitian political leaders understand both the stakes and the consequences.

I believe the time is ripe to propose new approaches. Without a change in course, Haiti’s deterioration will continue in ways that will be damaging both for the Haitian people and for the national security of the United States and our nearest neighbors in the Caribbean.

As we turn to 2020, a year that will mark the 30th anniversary of Haiti's first democratic election and the 10th anniversary of the tragic Haitian earthquake that claimed so many lives, Haiti must assume a more central role on the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

As an initial series of steps, I recommend the following:

The first is that the United States Secretary of State should convene a ministerial-level meeting of the Haiti Core Group, which consists of counterparts from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the European Union, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States, with the objective of formulating a comprehensive strategy to help Haiti meet humanitarian needs and create a pathway for negotiations with Haitian partners for an agreed timeframe for new congressional and Presidential elections.

Second, the United States and the Core Group should, then, spearhead a Haiti economic strategy and humanitarian relief session on the margins of the IMF-World Bank annual meetings that will occur in April 2020, including international relief groups and NGO's, with the objective of identifying how to rapidly surge food aid and economic support into Haiti's hardest-hit communities and ward off the possibility of severe malnutrition or even famine forecast to affect up to 4 million Haitians in 2020.

Third, I believe we need a comprehensive review of U.S. and international security assistance to Haiti, with the objective of strengthening the Haitian National Police and ensuring that funds are not diverted either into the Haitian army or paramilitary apparatuses that threaten the rule of law and human rights.

Fourth, I believe that the U.S. should consider the extension of Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Haitians in the United States past the 2021 expiration date and examine the possibilities for humanitarian parole for needy Haitians or for those whose lives are at serious risk.

And last, the U.S. Congress could consider establishing a short-term working group of Members to create a more active role for Congress to monitor developments and ensure that Haiti occupies a prominent place on the U.S. foreign policy agenda next year, with the aim of a full restoration of an elected democratic government as soon as possible and certainly by no later than 2021.

The crisis in Haiti, in conclusion, is deep, complex, and cannot be solved by the Haitians alone or by the United States or by any other single country or international actor. However, I am confident the members of this committee, working together with the U.S. Administration and the broader international community, can do considerably more to help put Haiti back to a prominent place on the U.S. regional and international agenda.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Erikson follows:]

**“Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis”**

Prepared Testimony  
Before the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade

Daniel P. Erikson  
Managing Director, Blue Star Strategies  
Senior Fellow, Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement

December 10, 2019

I begin my testimony by thanking Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, and the members of this distinguished committee for the opportunity to testify before you today about the current situation in Haiti – and to offer some ideas on what needs to be done to address the pressing challenges there. It is an honor for me to be here. I look forward to hearing from the committee and my fellow panelists and the subsequent discussion.

The testimony that I provide you today is in my personal capacity. The views and opinions are my own, informed by my more than two decades of experience working on Latin American and Caribbean issues, including a longstanding engagement with Haiti that has included more than a dozen trips to the country, most recently in November 2019. However, among the other institutions with which I am affiliated, I would like to also acknowledge the Inter-American Dialogue think-tank, where I worked on Haiti for many years and whose leadership has encouraged my renewed inquiry on the political and economic situation in Haiti.

My testimony today will focus on two areas: (1) a review of the current situation in Haiti; and (2) what a forward-leaning and constructive response by the United States and the broader international community should look like in 2020.

**Introduction**

Haiti today is experiencing its most profound political, economic, and social crisis in a generation. This is no small statement to make, given that Haiti, a country that is the second oldest republic in the Americas after the United States, is no stranger to crisis. Indeed, in the decades since the end of the Duvalier

dictatorship in 1986 and the first free election in 1990, Haiti has experienced numerous breaches of constitutional rule, seen leaders ousted through military force or civil unrest, twice been ruled by interim, unelected civilian governments, and experienced devastating earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods.

Yet if the Haitian people remain on many levels polarized and divided – on one issue there is a national consensus: Haiti has never experienced anything quite like this. Under the administration of the current President Jovenel Moïse, the political system is breaking down at all levels. The nearly eighteen months of convulsive protests and national strikes – that began in the aftermath of a poorly-timed fuel price hike in July 2018 and culminated most recently in twelve weeks of protests from September to November 2019 – have devastated the country’s already threadbare economy. “Peyi Lòk” it is called in Creole, which translates to “country lockdown.” This is a landscape where schools, courts, businesses, and public services all but cease, and economic activity stops. Now combine that with massive protests, violent clashes between the police and protestors, virtually unchecked corruption, a furious battle between government and private interests over state resources and private contracts, a growing threat of gangs both in Port-au-Prince and the countryside, and a pervasive environment of impunity. Haiti’s political and economic system has been hit before – and hit hard – both by man-made and natural disasters. But never before have the country’s politics fractured, its economic networks short-circuited, the bottom fallen out of its social safety net (much of which consists of international organizations, churches, and NGOs that have scaled back or ceased operations in the country), and the international response been so lackluster – all at the same time.

How did Haiti’s crisis become so severe? I would argue that the dramatic deterioration of the past 18 months has resulted from three overlapping crises. The first crisis, which is well-known to the members of this committee, is the decades-long struggle for Haiti to achieve a basic or minimal level of governability, including respect for democratic norms and the rule of law, a reasonable degree of social development and stability, and a sustainable pathway towards economic growth. The second crisis emerges from the calamitous developments and decisions during the administration of President Jovenel Moïse, who assumed office on February 7, 2017. These include an inability to build or sustain political alliances, bitter partisan conflict between the President and parliament, economic mismanagement, a growing cascade of corruption scandals, and excessive use of force against protestors, just to name a few. Several major reports focusing on the misuse of PetroCaribe funds by members of the current and past governments have galvanized public sentiment and created a rallying cry with deep social resonance.

Both the President and his fiercest political opponents have exacerbated polarization, and either blocked or undermined attempts at dialogue, leading to the breakdown of public administration in Haiti. Since March, the country has been without a confirmed Prime Minister to set policy and run the government. The entire Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of Parliament) and two-thirds of the Senate (the upper house) are set to expire in January 2020 with no new election on the horizon. Thus, the constitutional order will again be ruptured. The President will be left to rule by decree – most likely absent a political accord that would confer his decrees with greater legitimacy. For the United States, this will no doubt further complicate foreign assistance efforts and diplomatic engagement with a country that is already among the least free in the Americas.

What makes the present moment in Haiti so extraordinary – and alarming – is that the country's historic and acute crises have now converged with such force that the country's long-stressed social and economic foundations have been shaken to their core. Moreover, this critical juncture has emerged against the backdrop of a third crisis: a crisis of apathy and indifference among Haiti's international allies and partners. Despite recent signs that the depth of Haiti's agony is beginning to pierce this apathy, there still has been nowhere near the level of mobilization required by many of the governments and institutions that have historically taken responsibility to help Haitians and their governments during earlier periods of despair in the country. It is this "crisis of apathy" that I believe this committee is best positioned to address.

### **Haiti's Fractured Politics**

Haitian history is too rich and deep to fully cover in the scope of this testimony. However, one thing that is clear from a review of the country's 205 years of independence is that the current crisis in Haiti is occurring on a historic basis of weak institutions, poorly developed democratic norms, high levels of state capture, and a largely inhospitable external environment. Aspects of the current predicament can be backdated to various historic milestones, such as the inception of Haiti as the world's first free black state in 1804, or the U.S. military occupation of Haiti from 1915 to 1934, or the Cold War era dictatorship of "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier from 1957 to 1986, which ended with a transitional military government and a new constitution in 1987 that still governs Haiti to this today. In 1990, Haiti's transition to democracy ushered the country's historic crisis of governance into the modern era, when the election of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was followed by his ouster in a military coup in 1991. Haiti then spent three years under military rule from 1991 to 1994, until President Aristide was

restored through an international United Nations mission led by the United States, but with his term abrogated by new elections in 1995. His successor, Rene Preval, was elected as president from 1995 to 2000. Aristide was re-elected president in 2000, but only served three years of his second presidential term, from 2001 to 2004, until he was again ousted from power after confronting armed rebellion at home and international pressure, including from the United States, to cut his term short. Following this disruption in democratic rule, the United Nations stepped in to set up the international U.N. peacekeeping force known as MINUSTAH. Haiti was led on an interim basis by Prime Minister Gerard Latortue from 2004 to 2006, before new elections brought President Rene Preval back to power from 2006 to 2011. In 2010, Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake that flattened much of the capital city of Port-au-Prince, causing the deaths of more than 200,000 people and resulting in one of the worst natural disasters in modern history. Nevertheless, Preval concluded his term as scheduled and was replaced by his successor, President Michel Martelly, who governed the country until February 2016.

Unfortunately, the transition from Martelly to the current president of Haiti, Jovenel Moise, was far from smooth – and indeed, resulted in more than a year where Haiti was without an elected government. To briefly recap, the initial presidential election to replace Martelly was held on October 15, 2015, but was deemed to have been marked by widespread fraud and vote-rigging. Neither of the top two candidates – either Jovenel Moise or Jude Celestin – achieved the outright majority necessary to avoid a run-off vote, but the required second round was postponed multiple times due to lack of agreement and fears of violence. Meanwhile, Martelly left office in February 2016 without an elected successor, ushering in a one-year period where Haiti was governed by an interim president, Jocelerme Privert. In June 2016, the results from the first-round presidential election of October 2015 were annulled, and the date for the new elections – essentially a do-over of the prior first-round election results – were scheduled for November 20, 2016, more than a year after the original presidential ballot was held. In this new round of elections, Jovenel Moise won an outright victory over Jude Celestin, with 55% of votes cast, and was sworn into office on February 7, 2017. The important point here is that, more than a quarter-century after Haiti's first free presidential election in 1990, Haiti's historic crisis of governance remained very much alive before President Moise's term in office commenced. Even during a period of relative stability, a political impasse prevented the smooth, democratic transition of power at the end of the outgoing president Martelly's term in 2016. The persistence of Haiti's historic crisis of governance then merged with the acute political crisis than has unfolded over the past two years.



When President Jovenel Moise took office in February 2017, it marked a return to the constitutional order for the first time in twelve months. Moise, a close ally of former president Martelly and member of his Bald Head Party (PHTK), entered office with scant political experience and without an outright majority in either the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate, although his party did hold the largest plurality in both houses. This structural political challenge has bedeviled Moise from the very beginning, as Haiti's political system consists of an elected President who must then appoint a Prime Minister, subject to parliamentary approval, to run the government. While every Haitian President has struggled with this balance – and many Prime Ministers have entered the National Palace expecting to run the government only to find themselves principally deployed as a political shock absorber and scapegoat – Moise's record with Prime Ministers has been especially abysmal. Since 2017, there have already been four Prime Ministers: Dr. Jack Guy LaFontant (March 2017 – September 2018), Jean-Henry Ceant (September 2018 – March 2019), Jean-Michel Lapin (who served in an acting capacity from March – July 2019), and Fritz-William Michel (July 2019 to present.) The first two were dismissed following widespread protests regarding Moise's economic policies, while the latter two were never confirmed by the Parliament and only hold their titles on an interim basis. Effectively, this means that Haiti has lacked a fully functioning government since March 2019.

Moreover, the crisis of political legitimacy is about to accelerate dramatically, as the ongoing political stalemate has prevented the holding of new congressional elections that had been scheduled in October 2019. This means that the entire Chamber of Deputies and somewhere between one-third and two-thirds of the Senate (a figure in dispute as one-third of the Senate has already had its terms in office extended due to previous electoral delays) will cease to hold office on January 13, 2020. At that point, Haiti will have an elected but highly embattled President, no Prime Minister, no functioning Congress that could potentially confirm a nominee or pass legislation, and no plans for elections on the foreseeable horizon. Therefore, while the level of civic unrest in Haiti has diminished in recent weeks, and some signs of normalcy have begun to return, any sense of calm surely will not last. As CSIS senior associate Georges Fauriol notes in his article "[Haiti's Next Crisis](#)," published on December 6, "A temporary pause in national protests provides no evidence that the basic architecture of the political crisis has been altered... This means trouble and runs the very real danger of transitioning into a full blown politico-humanitarian crisis – in fact, the ingredients are already there."

### **Economy in Free Fall**

Haiti's gridlocked politics are sinking an economy that struggles even in normal times to stay afloat. Haiti has long been the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, ranked 168<sup>th</sup> of 189 countries in the worldwide 2018 Human Development Index published by the United Nations. According to the World Bank, its per capita GDP is only \$870 dollars. Out of a population of nearly 11 million, 6 million live below the poverty line, including 2.5 million that live below the extreme poverty line of \$1.23 per day. Over the past two years, the Haitian gourde (the local currency) has lost half its value against the U.S. dollar, further depleting the purchasing power of the average Haitian. None of these statistics are on track to improve in 2020. At the conclusion of the most recent economic consultations between the Haitian government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which took place the week of November 25, the head of the IMF team issued a statement that "the political, economic, and social crisis confronting Haiti is without precedent," and added, "As consequence of repeated lock-downs in the country . . . growth for the 2019 fiscal year is expected to be negative, at about -1.2 percent, while inflation rose to above 20 percent at end-September. This has worsened poverty and insecurity and deprived the government of the means to take productive investments and support activity." Even Haiti's most optimistic economic projections for 2020 barely exceed 1% growth, which is below the rate of population growth and would therefore imply either zero or negative growth next year.

Separately, last month the World Food Programme said that food insecurity in rural Haiti had increased 15% during 2019 due to disruptions in agricultural production, with more than one-third of the population – or 3.7 million people – requiring urgent assistance to meet daily food needs. Of this group, one million were estimated to be facing a food emergency (which is the Phase 4 level according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC). There are estimates that this number could increase by 10% to 4 million by March 2020.

In addition to food security challenges, Haitians continue to face important shortages of basic consumer goods, including fuel, water, and life-saving medicines. During the height of the "country lockdown" in the fall, most public services ceased – including, critically, schools – meaning that for two months nearly 2 million Haitian school children did not attend classes which, for many of them, also meant lack of access to school feeding programs. Haiti's energy sector is also of particular concern. In recent weeks, the Haitian government has unilaterally stopped payments with a private electricity provider. Neighborhoods that used to get 8 hours of electricity a day now only get between 3 and 5

hours. The face-off has plunged Port-au-Prince into further darkness while raising costs for businesses that provide their own energy through generators.

Meanwhile, the government has interfered in the functioning of the National Statistical Agency (IHSI, or Institut Haitien de Statistique et d'Informatique), which had been one of the few Haitian institutions respected for its honesty and absence of political interference. As a result, the country has entered into a “statistical blackout” period. This means that the depth of the economic crisis – which has surely deepened during the last 12 weeks of national strikes – is not currently known. The last annual inflation rate was published in August 2019. Official Haitian government data on quarterly economic activity and annual GDP growth are not now being published. Unless quickly reversed, this will further imperil cooperation with international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank that require official data as benchmarks for future agreements. In June, for example, the International Monetary Fund put on hold a three-year, \$229 million loan to Haiti that it had proposed in March, citing the country’s economic uncertainty.

Indeed, regional organizations like the Inter-American Development Bank have developed deep expertise in Haiti and played an important role in sectors like agriculture, infrastructure, and through projects such as the Caracol Industrial Park in Northeastern Haiti, which has created 14,000 jobs, with 60% being held by women. Important work is also being done by the Inter-American Foundation, which targets the most marginalized and underserved communities in Haiti, supporting community-designed and community-led projects, including women, youth and other traditionally disenfranchised groups.

The United States remains the largest single bilateral donor in Haiti, but both the amount and kind of support has changed dramatically over the past decade. According to the Congressional Research Service, the Fiscal Year 2020 request is \$145.45 million. If enacted, this figure will represent a 21% decrease from the \$184.56 million allotted for Haiti in Fiscal Year 2018. Moreover, more than two-thirds of recent funding for Haiti is concentrated in critically important Global Health Programs. But Economic Support Funds and Development Assistance, which accounted for more than one-third of aid at the beginning of the decade, when overall assistance for Haiti was regularly in excess of \$300 million, have been cut back dramatically in recent years. Following President Moïse’s recent request, the U.S. Agency for International Development has agreed to provide 2,000 tons of food aid, an important first step but still a drop in the bucket when

compared with the growing humanitarian need. In November, the U.S. Naval Ship Comfort visited Haiti from November 6-11. According to the U.S. Southern Command, during the six-day mission in Port-au-Prince, more than 3,603 patients were treated at on shore-based medical site, and 76 surgeries were performed aboard the ship. These were important measures that provide vital support but cannot replace a more comprehensive and systemic solution.

### **Human Rights, Security, and Migration**

Haiti's prolonged political conflict has deeply strained a system where human rights protections were already meager. According to the U.S. State Department's 2018 Human Rights report on Haiti, based on 2017 data, "human rights issues included isolated allegations of unlawful killings by police; excessive use of force by police; arbitrary detention; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; a judiciary subject to corruption and outside influence; physical attacks on journalists; widespread corruption and impunity; and human trafficking including forced labor." In the past year, there have been two major massacres carried out by armed gangs. The first, in La Saline in November 2018, killed at least 26 people according to the United Nations, while Haitian groups estimate a higher toll of 71. The second, which occurred in November 2019 in the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Bel Air, killed at least 15. More recently, Amnesty International has documented, including with video footage, two central problems in terms of government efforts to control the protests: use of live ammunition and the indiscriminate use of less-lethal weapons (i.e., tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets). On November 1, 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that "at least 42 people have died and 86 have been injured as tensions have escalated since the latest round of protests began on 15 September, according to information verified by our office. The vast majority suffered gunshot wounds. Reports indicate that security forces were responsible for 19 of the deaths while the rest were killed by armed individuals or unknown perpetrators."

Haiti's deteriorating security situation occurs just as the United Nations has dramatically scaled back its presence in Haiti, from the large peacekeeping mission of MINUSTAH (2004-2017), to a smaller justice support mission called MINUJUSTH (2017-2019), to the current United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). This means the 15-year peacekeeping operation in Haiti ended on October 15, 2019, as the United Nations transitions to a smaller footprint under BINUH focused on good governance and strengthening the justice sector. The Haitian National Police, which now number nearly 15,000, is a far more developed

and professionalized force today than was true a decade ago. This is largely due to the training provided by the United Nations peacekeeping mission, as well as U.S. assistance totaling \$250 million since 2010. However, the police force has been set back by recent events. Officers who are not trained in managing large public disturbances have misjudged the use of force and in some cases committed clear abuses. Moreover, the growing crime rate and the increasing boldness of criminal gangs – not just those traditionally based in the slums of Port-au-Prince – has incited more insecurity in the countryside that is beginning to overwhelm police capacity. Throughout 2019, the U.S. State Department has designated Haiti with either a Level 3 (Reconsider Travel) or Level 4 (Do Not Travel) warning, reflecting growing crime and unrest.

One casualty of decreased U.S. citizen travel has been hopes for a rebound in Haiti's travel sector. In April 2013, the Best Western Premier Hotel made news as the first U.S. hotel chain to expand into Haiti in many years. In October 2019, it closed down permanently. Delta Airlines, which has been providing service from the United States to Haiti for a decade, will cease all flights as of January 9, 2020, due to lack of demand. Meanwhile, Haiti's main north-to-south highway connecting Cap-Haitien to Port-au-Prince has become a zone where the main threats have transformed from road conditions and erratic drivers to an area where gang activities have a new and unwelcome presence. According to the United Nations' Global Study on Homicide 2019, which bases its results on 2017 data, Haiti's homicide rate of 10 per 100,000 was far below the countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) and in fact lower than some comparable regional countries, such as the Dominican Republic. But given the events of the past two years it seems highly likely these numbers will rise in the report's next iteration.

It should come as no surprise that more and more Haitians are leaving Haiti: crossing the land border to the Dominican Republic, launching crafts on the Caribbean sea to the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, and the United States, or catching the first flight out of Haiti to whatever country will take them in. The intensifying economic and social pressures are creating a migration wave from Haiti of substantial but unknown proportions. Part of this can be seen in the steady stream of public reports of migrants interdicted at sea. The Coast Guard returned 86 intercepted Haitians last November, another 70 in January, in early February at least 28 Haitians died at sea off the Bahamas, with 33 intercepted in April, and another boat with 50 in May off the coast of Cap Haitien. During one week in August, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted 37 Haitians on a freighter off of Turks and Caicos, then another 146, while a third boat with 53 aboard made landfall on

the islands. At that time, the U.S. Coast Guard reported that between October 2018 and August 2019, approximately 3,414 Haitian migrants were interdicted at sea, compared to 2,727 in the entire preceding Fiscal Year. Notably the total number of Haitian migrants found at sea outstrips the combined total of intercepted migrants from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and other Caribbean territories.

Since 2010 earthquake Haitians living in the United States have been among the ten nations whose citizens have received Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and the approximately 59,000 recipients constitute the third-largest group from any country after El Salvador and Honduras. According to the Center for Migration Studies, the average Haitian TPS holder has lived in the U.S. for 13 years and 27,000 of them have U.S.-born children who are U.S. citizens. In November 2017, the Trump administration initially sought to cancel this benefit for Haitians by 2018, a decision that was blocked by a California federal court, forcing the U.S. government to extend the program to January 2020. In a Federal Register notice on November 4, the Department of Homeland Security announced that TPS beneficiaries from Haiti (as well as several other countries) will have their designation extended until January 4, 2021.

#### **Haiti 2020: The Role for the U.S. in Shaping the Agenda**

Haiti has suffered periods of sharp deterioration before – and in virtually every instance the international community, led by the United States, has sought to respond in a robust and forward-leaning manner to identify core problems, work toward practical solutions, and alleviate reduce human suffering. Not every engagement has been successful, and some have been counterproductive, but important lessons have been learned. The first is that if the United States does not lead, no one else will step up to take our place. Second, the results have been more successful and more sustainable when Washington has been joined by partners across the hemisphere –from Canada to the Caribbean to South America – as well as allies in Europe and key international institutions like the Organization of American States, the United Nations, and the multilateral development banks. The third lesson is that, while political consensus is impossible in Haiti – and therefore should not be held out as a goal – political compromise can be attainable. But it can only be achieved when the international community joins forces and Haitian political leaders understand both the stakes and the consequences.

There are stakes and consequences for the United States as well. Haiti's increasing instability in a region already experiencing widespread unrest may force the U.S. to undertake a broader intervention that is still, at this stage,

preventable. In recent months, the United States has sent increasingly senior level envoys to Haiti to call for national dialogue and good governance, including U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft and, most recently U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs David Hale, who traveled to Haiti in March and again in early December. The argument that Haiti's political solutions must come from Haitians themselves, and cannot be enforced or dictated by the United States, certainly contains some validity. However, there is no sign that intermittent calls for dialogue and hopes for Haitian-led problem-solving have lodged any success in 2019 or are likely to do so in 2020. Instead, these efforts need to be clearly linked to an overarching bilateral and multilateral strategy that brings sustained diplomatic pressure on Haiti's leaders while taking steps to alleviate the humanitarian crisis among innocent Haitians whose lives have been upended. In the eighteen months since the protests began to convulse Haiti in July 2018, hard-won hindsight has clearly shown a crisis that is accelerating in virtually every dimension. Therefore, the time is ripe to propose new approaches in 2020. Without a change in course, Haiti's deterioration will continue in ways that will be damaging both for the Haitian people and for the national security of the United States and our nearest neighbors in the Caribbean.

In this context, I would like to congratulate this committee for the foresight of holding this hearing and taking on the crucial task of beginning to reinsert Haiti as a priority issue in Washington that will require more sustained and focused attention. As we turn to 2020 – a year that will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Haiti's first democratic election and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tragic Haitian earthquake that claimed so many lives – Haiti must assume a more central role on the U.S. foreign policy agenda. As an initial series of steps, I recommend the following:

1. Secretary of State Pompeo convene – as soon as possible and no later than the first quarter of next year – a ministerial-level meeting of the Haiti Core Group – which consists of his counterparts from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, the European Union, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States – with the objective of formulating a comprehensive strategy towards Haiti to meet humanitarian needs and lay the framework for a successful congressional and presidential elections in the 2020 – 2021 timeframe.
2. Following the ministerial, the United States and its Core Group partners should spearhead a Haiti economic strategy and humanitarian relief session on the margins of the IMF/World Bank annual meetings in April – including international relief groups and NGOs – with the objective of identifying how to rapidly surge food aid and economic support into Haiti's hardest-hit

communities and warding off the possibility of severe malnutrition or even famine forecast to affect up to 4 million Haitians in 2020.

3. A comprehensive review of US and international security assistance to Haiti, with the objective of strengthening the Haitian National Police – one of the positive legacies of more than 15 years of a UN peacekeeping presence – and ensuring that funds are not diverted either into the Haitian army or paramilitary apparatuses that threaten the rule of law and human rights.
4. The extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians in the United States past the current 2021 expiration date and examination of possibilities for humanitarian parole for needy Haitians or those whose lives are at serious risk.
5. Lastly, the U.S. Congress could establish a short-term, bipartisan and bicameral working group of members, under the framework of “Haiti 2020.” The purpose would be to create a more active role for Congress to monitor developments, convene experts, engage with Haitian counterparts and members of the international community, and ensure that Haiti occupy a prominent place on the U.S. foreign policy agenda next year with the aim of a full restoration of an elected democratic government as soon as possible and certainly by no later than 2021.

In conclusion, the crisis in Haiti is deep, complex, and cannot be solved either by the Haitians alone or by the United States or by any other single country or international actor. However, I am confident that the members of this committee, working together with the U.S. administration and the broader international community, can do considerably more to help put Haiti back on the path towards democratic governance, more equitable and sustainable development, and social peace. There is no question that much hard work lays ahead. The first crucial step will be to restore Haiti to a prominent place on the U.S., regional, and international agenda.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your questions.

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**Author Bio:**

Daniel P. Erikson is Managing Director at Blue Star Strategies, LLC, an international consulting firm, where he leads the firm's Latin America practice. He is also a senior fellow at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement, a foreign policy research center affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania. He previously served as a special advisor to the Vice President and senior advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. In addition to his U.S. government experience, Mr. Erikson previously served as director of Caribbean Programs and senior associate for U.S. Policy at the Inter-American Dialogue, which included frequent travels to Haiti during the 2000s. Mr. Erikson received his Masters in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and a B.A. in International Relations from Brown University. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Mexico and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

The author acknowledges the research assistance of Willa Lerner and Tamar Ziff in the preparation of this testimony.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.  
Ms. Hermantin.

**STATEMENT OF MS. LEONIE MARIE HERMANTIN, DIRECTOR  
OF DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNICATIONS, AND STRATEGIC  
PLANNING, SANT LA HAITIAN NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER**

Ms. HERMANTIN. Good morning. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the chair, the ranking member, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I also would like to thank Congresswoman Wilson for the opportunity for the Haitian diaspora to be represented.

This hearing is timely because Haiti is, yet again, at another crossroads. We face, yet again, another crisis, but this time it is manmade.

I am really humbled by the great presentations made from my predecessors here. And so, I will not talk about the political situation. I will limit my remarks to our concerns from the diaspora's perspective, both the humanitarian crisis and the issue on security.

I am here as a member of the Haitian diaspora. In the United States alone, there are over a million persons of Haitian ancestry, the majority of whom are naturalized or U.S.-born citizens.

Our diaspora is a very diverse one, and we do not all speak in one voice. But I can speak with total certainty that we are united on key points.

One, that we are extremely concerned about what is happening in Haiti today, and that Haiti's poverty offends us deeply. We are hard-working people with exemplary work ethic and entrepreneurial spirit. Our people deserve better.

Like many of you, we are confounded by the lack of results from U.S. investments in Haiti. And like the PetroChallengers demand to know what happened to billions of PetroCaribe funds, we, too, want to know about the impact of billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars invested in Haiti for the past 30 years. Why are you still calling Haiti the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere after our government has invested so much in so many programs?

We all agree that the current status quo which supports corruption and violation of the rule of law must be done with. It is time. We all agree that Haiti needs to invest in education, health, infrastructure, agricultural reform, job creation, and constitutional reforms. We all agree on that. And we also believe that Haitians must resolve their problems.

First, I will quickly talk about the humanitarian crisis, which has been covered in-depth here. The crisis began in 2018 and, as you can imagine, in a fragile economy like Haiti, the smallest shock can upend the lives of a great majority. One of the ways that many in Haiti have been able to survive is with support of family and friends in the diaspora. According to the World Bank, remittances from the diaspora to Haiti reached record levels in 2018, amounting to \$3.1 billion from \$2.4 billion in 2017, a 30 percent increase.

This current crisis has a direct financial impact on Haitian-American households, as we are often the economic lifeline for families back home. Data indicates that 90 percent of remittances come from North America.

I will skip and talk about the security crisis. This crisis that we are currently facing also has a lot to do with insecurity, and that affects us in many ways. Many of us in the diaspora are concerned by the inability of the Haitian government to guarantee our security. We are concerned about the gang arms. We are concerned about what appears to be an extremely chaotic situation, and that has forced us to cancel personal humanitarian and business trips to Haiti.

When it comes to Haiti, the U.S. has made it clear that it believes in elections and democratic process, but has ignored the Haitian people's relentless demands for change. It is clear, paradoxically, that the U.S.'s position is more flexible in other parts of the world. In Hong Kong, for example, we proudly stand with the people and not the elected leaders. We believe, as Haitians and as Americans, that it is important for the U.S. to listen and respect the voices of the people. We Haitian-Americans will welcome bipartisan support for the Haitian people in their call for justice and social-economic inclusion.

We also want to encourage you to cover cross-border corruptions. We know where the dollars are siphoned to. We need them to be brought back to Haiti.

We also recommend that the U.S. work in partnership with Haitians locally and the diaspora in the United States and abroad, as opposed to the big, international development organizations.

We need to be more creative and stop using unsuccessful strategies with the same actors. And I am talking about USAID, who proposed the same programs under different titles to get the same results. The Haitian people and the diaspora demand accountability and transparency, neither of which is always forthcoming under the current USAID practices.

I will take these last seconds to sound an alarm about the humanitarian crisis that is in the making in Haiti. We know it is going to happen. And as Mr. Erikson just stated, it is going to be of gigantic proportion, very scary. We cannot close our ears, mind, or our hearts. We have to be prepared. The indicators do not lie.

And again, we like talking about the policies. U.S. agencies in Haiti often take the route and funnel their support through bilateral and multilateral agencies, the usual suspects. We believe that a better strategy is to leverage the diaspora to maximize U.S. investments.

I will end with a quote from Martin Luther King. "Why should there be hunger and deprivation in any land, in any city, at any table, when man has the resources, the scientific knowhow to provide all mankind with the basic necessities of life? There's no deficit in resources. The deficit is in human will."

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Dr. Garrastazu.

**STATEMENT OF DR. ANTONIO GARRASTAZU, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE**

Mr. GARRASTAZU. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Yoho, distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.

Thank you, also, I must add, for organizing a hearing on this topic critical to U.S. interests and the future of democratic governance in Haiti.

Since the inauguration of President Noise in February 2017, widespread protests have become commonplace, severely impacting Haiti's governability. Mass protests swelled in September 2019, really with no end in sight. Although protests are waning and streets are quieter, demonstrations will likely continue, given the opposition's demand the President step down.

Furthermore, the fact that elections for the entire Chamber of Deputies, two-thirds of the Senate, and all local officials should have taken place on October 27th of this year continue to exacerbate the ongoing political impasse and an increasingly fragile environment, creating a governance crisis in the new year.

An unstable Haiti poses a risk to U.S. national security. Haiti is a large recipient of U.S. aid in the region, second only to Colombia. U.S. assistance to Haiti has traditionally been focused on health, and in Fiscal Year 2020 only 4 percent of the requested funding was allocated for democracy, human rights, and governance, while 80 percent was for health-related initiatives.

Concentration of development assistance at the national level, however, has shown few results, as evidenced by the current political and economic conditions. Efforts at bolstering the capacity of local officials and civil society organizations, youth, private sector, and using the talents and resources of the diaspora community will provide a sustainable path toward Haiti's journey to self-reliance.

Targeted foreign assistance on democracy, human rights, and governance should really be a priority. Geopolitically, Haiti serves as an important U.S. ally in the region. Haiti could be considered a partner in countering malign Chinese interference by preventing China from concluding, through its Belt and Road Initiative, more opaque and economically questionable infrastructure projects that bring unsustainable debt burdens in this region and increase dependence on China.

From 2018 to 2019, there has also been a shift in Haiti's approach to voting in the Organization of American States by not recognizing the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro as President of Venezuela. Haiti also taken a similar stance on the increasingly authoritarian government in Nicaragua.

Building the capacity of local governments and providing supporting outside the capital Port-au-Prince I believe is critical to enhancing accountability and State presence and bringing institutions closer to citizens. Since 2016, IRI has worked with municipal officials and civil society organizations in Haiti's Greater North to strengthen their institutional capacity, promote citizen engagement, and encourage marginalized groups, including youth and women, to have a voice and participate in political processes. Developing political and administrative skills at the local level is much more effective than the current top-down approach adopted by many foreign assistance donors.

IRI has also been working with local CSOs across the Grand North to improve advocacy and oversight of local governments. The institute has supported the creation of grassroots departmental networks with support from USAID. The creation of these networks

is significant because of the centralized nature of decisionmaking in Haiti and the need to provide a voice to leaders outside the capital and at the local level.

There are many political, economic, and security challenges, as we have discussed, in Haiti's democratic governance landscape that should be addressed through U.S. foreign assistance. A cornerstone of this strategy is strengthening local Haitian institutions. The following recommendations could be a step in the right direction:

First, a sustained focus on local governments and bolstering the capacity of civil society organizations is necessary.

Second, a focus on youth to serve as agents of positive changes in the communities is critical.

Third, there is a need for more public opinion research to better understand the challenges Haitians face to effectively design and implement the U.S. foreign assistance programs.

Fourth, private sector engagement has an important role to play to ensure the sustainability of foreign investments.

Last, the U.S. should continue to work with Haiti's diaspora community as a critical element in the foreign policy assistance process.

Assessing U.S. policy toward Haiti, a country of perpetual crisis, is never easy and really can be frustrating. Yet, U.S. commitment to Haiti needs to remain strong. Haiti's proximity to the United States, its regional geopolitical implications, and relevance to our national security have never been more important. Supporting a strong, committed, and empowered local governance in Haiti is but one economically sensible tool at the disposal of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Garrastazu follows:]

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INTERNATIONAL  
REPUBLICAN  
INSTITUTE

**Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis**

**TESTIMONY OF: Antonio Garrastazu, Ph.D.**

*Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean*

**International Republican Institute**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, AND TRADE  
December 10, 2019

## Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rooney, distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Thank you, also, for organizing a hearing on this topic critical to U.S. interests and the future of democratic governance in Haiti.

The Republic of Haiti, with its stark authoritarian past, has had a fragile transition to democracy since the end of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986. With its political instability, institutional weakness and rampant corruption, Haiti ranks 161 out of 180 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.<sup>1</sup> Rising insecurity and challenges from numerous natural disasters have hampered economic development, stirred citizen unrest and limited the Government's ability to adequately address the democratic deficits impacting the nation. Located 838 miles south of Florida, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Six million, or 60 percent of Haitians, live below the poverty line, and almost a quarter in extreme poverty.<sup>2</sup> Since the inauguration of President Jovenel Moïse in February 2017, widespread protests have become commonplace. The Administration's policies — increase of government revenue through tax hikes and elimination of fuel subsidies — as well as citizen outrage at corruption and a remobilization of the army — have exacerbated political gridlock, increased migration, economic uncertainty and severely impacted Haiti's governability. President Moïse has nominated three Prime Ministers in his almost three years in office, the government remains without an approved budget and elections for the entire Chamber of Deputies, local offices and two-thirds of the Senate remain in limbo.

An unstable Haiti poses a risk to U. S. national security. Haiti is a large recipient of U.S. aid in the region, second only to Colombia. While U.S.-Haiti policy is, "designed to foster institutions and infrastructure necessary to achieve strong democratic foundations and meaningful poverty reduction through sustainable development,"<sup>3</sup> aid has declined in the past decade. From a high of \$380.3 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 to a requested \$145.5 million in FY 2020, a 15 percent reduction from FY2019. Concentration of development assistance at the national level, however, has shown few results as evidenced by the current political and economic conditions across the island. Efforts at bolstering the capacity of local officials and civil society organizations (CSO), youth, private sector engagement and using the talents and resources of the diaspora community will provide a sustainable path toward Haiti's Journey to Self-Reliance (JSR). Targeted foreign assistance on democracy, human rights and governance should be a priority to help Haiti from the brink and get the nation on the right track. This will be more effective at ensuring good governance — accountability, transparency and economic development — to combat endless cycles of corruption, strengthen institutions, rule and law and citizen support for democracy.

<sup>1</sup> "Corruption Perceptions Index 2018 – Haiti." *Transparency International*, Transparency International, <https://www.transparency.org/country/HTI>.

<sup>2</sup> "The World Bank in Haiti – Overview." *The World Bank*, The World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>.

<sup>3</sup> "U.S. Relations with Haiti - United States Department of State." *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-haiti/>.

### Political Context

Haiti has been shaken by a series of protests over the past several years. This is mostly due to government disfunction and poor governance. A lack of economic opportunities, continuous political gridlock, and inadequate government responses, and attention to, citizen demands have exacerbated the current political crisis engulfing the nation. Protests, which began shortly after President Moïse took office, escalated in July 2018 when then-Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant announced the end of fuel subsidies and tax increases to promote a policy agenda, and secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund, aimed at strengthening Haiti's economy. These included agricultural, health care, energy and infrastructure reforms. Outrage at this announcement, without citizen input, and widespread government corruption claims, led to the decree being rescinded. There have been two Prime Ministers since Lafontant left office. The current nominee, Fritz-William Michel, has not been ratified by parliament, essentially leaving the country without a functioning government.

Mass protests swelled in September 2019, with no end in sight. Haitians are demanding President Moïse step down given the rise in food and gas prices, including corruption allegations stemming from the defunct PetroCaribe fund, an oil alliance between Caribbean nations and Venezuela for preferential oil prices and payment deferrals up to 25 years.<sup>4</sup> The situation has been worsened by a crisis in public services. Gas and electricity shortages across the country have severely hindered public transportation, most schools remain closed and hospitals are running low on supplies. The Haitian National Police (HNP) have gone on strike demanding better wages and working conditions increasing public safety concerns. Amnesty International reported there have been at least 35 people killed since the protests began.<sup>5</sup> In the midst of growing instability, the U.S. has sent the Naval ship *Comfort* to assist with humanitarian supplies, treating more than 3,500 citizens.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. has also released a statement expressing support for democratically elected President Moïse and called for a national dialogue to end the tensions throughout the country. High-level U.S. government officials — U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale — visited Haiti on November 20 and December 5, respectively, to press for an inclusive, national dialogue and need to overcome the challenges to restore a functioning

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<sup>4</sup> The idea was that governments under PetroCaribe would use the monies for economic development and social programs. In Haiti, at least \$2 billion USD disappeared. Nugent, Ciara. "Haiti Protests: What Is PetroCaribe and Why Is It Fueling Unrest?" *Time*, Time, 24 Jun. 2019, <https://time.com/5609054/haiti-protests-petrocaribe/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Haiti: Amnesty International verifies evidence of excessive use of force against protesters." *Amnesty International*, Amnesty International, 21 Oct. 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/haiti-amnesty-verifies-evidence-excessive-force-against-protesters/>.

<sup>6</sup> Total U.S. contributions to partners are valued at over \$300,000. The U.S. has provided 12 generators, several examining, operating, and treatment tables, blood donation chairs and recliners, hospital bed, and incubators. Sison, Michele J., and U.S. Mission Haiti. "Closing Ceremony of USNS Comfort 2019 Visit." *U.S. Embassy in Haiti*, 12 Nov. 2019, <https://ht.usembassy.gov/closing-ceremony-of-usns-comfort-2019-visit/>.



government.<sup>7</sup> Although protests are waning and streets are quieter across Haiti, demonstrations will likely continue given the opposition's uncompromising demand that President Moïse step down. Furthermore, the fact that elections for the entire Chamber of Deputies, two-thirds of the Senate and all local officials should have been held on October 27, 2019, continues to exacerbate the ongoing political impasse and an increasingly fragile environment.<sup>8</sup>

As a result, there are several potential scenarios that could unfold over the next year. First, on January 13, 2020, there will be an absence of a functioning parliament and the Executive will, most likely, begin to rule by decree. This would likely further galvanize the opposition and exacerbate protests. Second, the current parliamentary terms of office could be extended, preserving the untenable status quo. A third option would require a constitutional assembly to draft a new constitution or amend the current one. Fourth, the opposition may agree to a national dialogue with the President and a compromise is reached. This is unlikely given the opposition's current stance on having Moïse resign, which he has vowed not to do. Lastly, some experts have suggested the need for a neutral, respected mediator to bring the two parties to the negotiation table.

#### **U.S. Assistance to Haiti**

Ever since establishing democratic relations with the country in 1862, the U.S. has played a key role in Haiti's development and advancement toward democracy. From reinstating the first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, after a 1991 coup to support resulting from a devastating earthquake and hurricane in 2010 and 2016, respectively, the U.S. has been actively engaged in assisting in Haiti's development. Foreign assistance to Haiti has consistently declined during the last decade from a high of \$380.3 million in FY 2011. In FY 2020, the Trump Administration requested \$145.5 million in aid to Haiti, a 15 percent reduction from FY 2019.<sup>9</sup> Most of the U.S. assistance to Haiti has traditionally been focused on health. In FY 2020, for example, only 4 percent of the requested funding was allocated for democracy, human rights and governance (\$6.0 million) while 80 percent was for health projects (\$115.7 million).<sup>10</sup> Focus on democracy and governance and local government institutions can help Haiti on its Journey to Self-Reliance (JSR).

According to the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) JSR's FY 2020 country Roadmap, Haiti has a 0.09 score (on a 0-1 scale) for government effectiveness. This indicator measures the quality of public services, civil service and its independence from political pressure, policy formulation and implementation and the credibility of the government's

<sup>7</sup> "Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale's Travel to The Bahamas and Haiti - United States Department of State." *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 4 Dec. 2019, <https://www.state.gov/under-secretary-of-state-for-political-affairs-david-hales-travel-to-the-bahamas-and-haiti/>.

<sup>8</sup> Elections have not occurred for numerous reasons, including a lack of a functioning government and approval of a national budget.

<sup>9</sup> Taft-Morales, Maureen. "Haiti's Political and Economic Conditions." Congressional Research Service, updated Jul. 1, 2019, <https://fas.org/spp/crs/row/R45034.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *Foreign Assistance in Haiti*, ForeignAssistance.gov, <https://foreignassistance.gov/explore/country/Haiti>.

commitment to its stated policies. This indicator demonstrates that strengthening institutions, democracy, human rights and governance should be a major focal point of U.S. assistance in need of more funding. This, in turn, will help provide a path toward sustainability and local ownership to Haiti's ongoing governability crisis.

#### **Haiti: A Strategic U.S. Ally**

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with over 6 million, or 60 percent of the population, living below the poverty line.<sup>11</sup> The country's proximity to the United States, its regional geo-political significance, unstable political climate and increased insecurity leading to an influx of roughly 676,000 migrants to the U.S. out of an 11 million population, has vast national security implications.<sup>12</sup> Geopolitically, Haiti serves as an important U.S. ally in the region. First, Haiti can be considered a partner in countering malign Chinese interference. By maintaining its strong relationship with Taiwan, Haiti helps prevent China from concluding, through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), more-opaque and economically questionable infrastructure projects that bring unsustainable debt burdens in this region and increased dependence on China. This is significant given that many countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, including its neighbor on the Island of Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic, have close ties to China. By maintaining a good relationship with Haiti, the U.S. will help ensure China does not gain yet another foothold in Latin America and the Caribbean using corruption to secure preferential terms for Chinese state-owned companies and manipulating the information environment to ensure a China-friendly narrative and advance Chinese Communist Party interests.

Second, from 2018 to 2019, there has been a shift in Haiti's approach to voting in the Organization of American States (OAS), siding more recently with the U.S. This is a further testament of Haitian support for democracy and U.S. policy across the region. For example, Haiti voted, in defiance of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) bloc, at the OAS not to recognize the legitimacy of Nicolas Maduro as President of Venezuela. This was not a popular decision among Haitians and demonstrated a fundamental shift in regional politics. This was the first time Haiti voted against the authoritarian Venezuela regime and represented a critical moment of solidarity for maintaining momentum to help end the current impasse in Venezuela. Haiti has taken a similar stance on the increasingly authoritarian government in Nicaragua. Haiti abstained from voting in the OAS in condemning violence in Nicaragua, called for the government to agree on an electoral calendar, voted for a resolution on the situation in the country and in favor of appointing a commission to carry out diplomatic efforts in the country.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> "The World Bank in Haiti – Overview." *The World Bank*, The World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>

<sup>12</sup> Schulz, Jennifer, and Jeanne Batalova. "Haitian Immigrants in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*, Migration Policy Institute, 2 Aug. 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/haitian-immigrants-united-states>.

<sup>13</sup> "OAS Condemns Violence in Nicaragua and Calls on Government to Agree to Electoral Calendar." OAS, OAS, 18 Jul. 2018, [https://www.oas.org/en/media\\_center/press\\_release.asp?sCodigo=E-048/18](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-048/18).

### Local Governance and the Way Forward for Haiti

The governance challenges facing Haiti require a robust response from the democracy assistance community. Building the capacity of local governments and providing support outside of the capital Port-au-Prince, enhancing accountability and state presence, and bringing institutions closer to citizens, while ensuring they have an active role in enhancing their communities, is critical to advancing democratic principles.

The U.S. government has made positive investments in local governance projects such as the International Republican Institute's (IRI) National Endowment for Democracy-funded initiatives, TetraTech's USAID-funded LOKAL+<sup>14</sup> and RTI International's USAID-funded project, Supporting the Efficient Management of State Resources (GERÉ).<sup>15</sup> While these investments are significant, local officials remain in need of support. Municipalities often do not receive their national budget allocations and therefore have very limited resources to pay their own salaries – let alone develop their communities – especially in rural areas. These deficiencies are compounded by the circumstantial (i.e., poverty, high unemployment) and cultural reality (i.e., lack of trust) that tax collection is extremely difficult in Haiti. Beyond these financial limitations, IRI has also found that there is a need to invest in the skills of local officials. Municipal representatives often do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities and could benefit from increased support in leadership, resource management, fundraising techniques, negotiating skills to interact with national officials and citizen engagement, among others.

Since 2016, IRI, for example, has worked with municipal officials and civil society organizations in Haiti's Greater North area to strengthen their institutional capacity, promote citizen engagement and encourage marginalized groups, including youth and women, to have a voice and participate in political processes. The Institute is helping build basic governing skills, introduce municipal governance best practices supported by civil society among elected and municipal officials based on community needs. Developing political and administrative skills at the local level is much more effective than the current top-down approach adopted by many foreign assistance donors. Given that local officials are on the front lines and have more direct interaction with citizens on a regular basis, IRI's governance work in Haiti focuses on tailored technical assistance and the creation of action plans that promote citizen engagement and enhance governing skills and democratic best practices with select local officials, including principal mayors, deputy principal mayors and director generals.<sup>16</sup> Several examples can help put issues of good governance into perspective.

<sup>14</sup> "Local Government Capacity Building, Haiti." *Tetra Tech*, Tetra Tech, <https://www.tetrattech.com/en/projects/local-government-capacity-building-haiti>.

<sup>15</sup> "Improving Governance Systems and Service Delivery in Haiti." *RTI*, RTI, <https://www.rti.org/impact/improving-governance-systems-and-service-delivery-haiti>.

<sup>16</sup> IRI works in the following 10 municipalities — Bas-Limbe, Caracol, Limbe, Milot, Perches, Pignon, Pilate, Port Margot, Saint Suzanne and Vallières.

First, as part of IRI's good governance approach, officials from the municipality of Caracol developed a tax collection campaign to connect with citizens and inform them on how the municipality will use taxes to better their community. While unemployment and a lack of trust toward officials hindered tax collection, the director general reported the five-day awareness campaign distributed a total of 1,477 tax collection forms, building trust between local officials and their constituents. Investing in local governance initiatives such as these, need to be part of a long-term strategy with an emphasis on citizen engagement and viable state presence across the country.

Second, in Pignon, Mayor Nicolas Victorin is challenging the status quo and his experience depicts how youth can serve as agents of change in their communities. In March 2018, Mayor Victorin attended IRI's Generation Democracy<sup>17</sup> (GenDem) Leadership Academy in Panama City, Panama, where youth leaders shared experiences, best practices and lessons learned. During the event, Mayor Victorin sought regional partnerships, including with then-Panama City Mayor Jose Blandon. Mayor Blandon invited him to return to Panama to share his story and experience during a series of events commemorating Black Ethnicity month, an annual celebration in Panama. In May 2018, Mayor Victorin returned to Panama and participated in a fundraiser concert for Pignon organized by the host municipality. The \$3,200 raised, helped support a six-month micro-loan program for 10 women and a cassava-root business in a rural commune near Pignon that is still running strong.<sup>18</sup>

By leveraging its Generation Democracy network in Haiti, IRI is providing young leaders with a platform to discuss opportunities, share lessons learned, experiences and strategies for mobilizing peers. Fabrice Dugas, President of Groupe ECHO Haiti, which promotes youth innovation and participation in national development efforts, has also participated in Generation Democracy, IRI's flagship global youth initiative, sharing their experiences with young leaders from the region and around the world. As Dugas noted, "I gained the energy I needed to do more [...], to inspire others, to empower others, to fight for the Haitian youth. Because if all of these young leaders can do it, so can I."<sup>19</sup>

IRI has also been working with local civil society organizations (CSOs) across the Grand North region to improve advocacy and oversight of local governments. The Institute has supported the creation of a Grassroots Departmental Network (GDN), with support from USAID, composed of 15 local CSOs from across the region. The creation of the GDN is significant because of the centralized nature of decision-making in Haiti and the need to provide a voice to leaders outside the capital and at the local level. In partnership with the University of Haiti-Campus Henri

<sup>17</sup> Generation Democracy is a global network of young leaders across 70 countries that seeks to bridge the gap between youth and government.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, Roger. "Transforming Regional Experiences into Action: A Story from the Youngest Mayor in Haiti." *Democracy Speaks*, The International Republican Institute, 14 Aug. 2014,

<https://www.democracyspeaks.org/blog/transforming-regional-experiences-action-story-youngest-mayor-haiti>.

<sup>19</sup> Dugas, Fabrice. "Generation Democracy Testimonial: 'Panama Found Me.'" *Democracy Speaks*, The International Republican Institute, 25 Apr. 2018, <https://www.democracyspeaks.org/blog/generation-democracy-testimonial-panama-found-me>.

Christophe de Limonade (UEH-CHCL), IRI is conducting a seven-month long certified course teaching 28 members of the GDN how to be agents of change in Haitian civil society. The course provides an opportunity for participants from a diversity of backgrounds to learn about the functions of government, how to hold their governments accountable, advocate for their rights, as well as identify priorities in their communities. Participants are currently drafting policy recommendations on issues of interest to shape the narrative across the country. IRI is also working with UEH-CHCL to develop a Policy Hub within the campus to serve as a repository of knowledge for local actors across the Grand North area.

Grassroots movements have emerged across the region, including in Haiti with the “Petro Challengers,” who are mostly young middle-class citizens frustrated with the status quo and corruption which in turn led to the mass protests that have paralyzed the country for more than two months. Both national and local officials seem to be afraid of engaging with their constituents. The lack of engagement with citizens is compounded by poor public relations and communications skills, both internally and externally. Indeed, President Moïse’s speeches during the current crisis, the first one was a prerecorded message that was disseminated at 3:00 am with very little substance, show an insensitivity toward citizens and have aggravated the current political situation.

#### **Recommendations for U.S. Foreign Assistance in Haiti**

There are many political, economic and security challenges in Haiti’s democratic governance landscape that should be addressed through U.S. foreign assistance. A cornerstone of this strategy is strengthening local Haitian institutions. Though providing humanitarian and health assistance is important and critical, it will not have the intended impact without strong democratic institutions to ensure these investments are being efficiently and effectively distributed. Sustained engagement by the U.S. is crucial to ensuring Haiti moves toward a more stable future, where crises can be averted, and U.S. interests protected. The following recommendations are a step in the right direction.

**First, a sustained focus on local level governments and bolstering the capacity of civil society organizations is necessary.** There is often an overemphasis to concentrate development assistance at the national level, yet local leaders are on the front lines, interacting and addressing citizens’ concerns. If local level governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) work together, there is an opportunity, a space, to improve accountability and transparency, critical for advancing democracy. Building the capacity of civil society organizations are a means for citizens to organize and hold their leaders accountable. IRI has had positive results at the local level where politicians and civic leaders are willing to learn essential leadership and accountability skills.

Generally, CSOs in Haiti are extremely politicized and tend to be used as a steppingstone into political parties or government positions. This is problematic because CSO leaders are often focused on short-term interests and therefore cannot truly hold government officials accountable. CSOs seem to be concentrated at the national level and there’s a dearth of effective organizations at the local level. Most of the CSOs that IRI works with are grassroots

organizations with very broad mandates and objectives. There is a need to strengthen local grassroots organizations with specific skill sets, as well as to help them specialize in strategic areas of interest, such as democracy and governance.

**Second, a focus on youth, a third of Haiti's population,<sup>20</sup> to serve as agents of positive change in their communities is critical.** Youth involvement in civic engagement and outreach will empower them as leaders and help them become more interested and involved in the political process.

**Third, there is a need for more public opinion research to better understand the challenges Haitians face to inform national and international policymakers and effectively design and implement U.S. foreign assistance programs.** Research and qualitative and quantitative public opinion data are a cornerstone of IRI's approach to programming. IRI implemented a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) in Haiti to help understand the problems and opportunities impacting the decision-making and sectoral influence of political, electoral, and civic actors both at the national and local levels. The PEA served as a tool for IRI's governance approach in country. More mixed method surveys are greatly needed to inform and adapt future U.S. foreign policy and assistance in Haiti.

**Fourth, as described in USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance, private sector engagement has an important role to play to ensure the sustainability of foreign investments.** The support of entrepreneurial spaces, incubators and accelerators, such as Banj, are an example of the positive impact the private sector can have in equipping young Haitians with marketable skills and providing spaces to co-create and innovate.

**Fifth, the U.S. should continue to work with Haiti's diaspora community as a critical element in the foreign assistance process.** The diaspora community represents 11 percent of Haiti's population.<sup>21</sup> In 2018, remittances represented 31 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product.<sup>22</sup> This community, which maintains close ties to the island, can serve as champions to address gaps and challenges facing the nation through financing of projects, providing human capital, expertise and technical know-how to help shape and inform Haiti's future.

## Conclusion

Haiti is at a critical juncture. Rampant corruption, diminished rule of law, weak institutions and a lack of adequate responses from governments, including citizen outreach, are fueling popular discontent and are responsible for the country's continued dysfunction. In order to set the country on a path to stability and democratic reform, citizens must be included in decision making

<sup>20</sup> "Republic of Haiti – Country of Origin Information Paper." *INURED*, INURED, Aug. 2017, [http://www.inured.org/uploads/2/5/2/6/25266591/unchr\\_coi\\_haiti\\_final\\_redacted\\_report\\_inured.pdf](http://www.inured.org/uploads/2/5/2/6/25266591/unchr_coi_haiti_final_redacted_report_inured.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> OECD/INURED (2017), *Interactions entre politiques publiques, migrations et développement en Haiti*, Les voies de développement, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264278844-fr>.

<sup>22</sup> "World Bank Migration and Remittances Data." *The World Bank*, The World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/>.

in areas that impact their lives, their families, their communities. Ensuring transparency, accountability and enhanced participation and stakeholder support at the local level is key to ensure this cycle of discontent becomes an opportunity for citizens to feel democratic governance is the best way forward. Assessing U.S. policy toward Haiti, a country in perpetual crisis, is never easy and can be frustrating. Yet, the U.S. commitment to Haiti, needs to remain strong. Haiti's proximity to the U.S., its regional geo-political implications and relevance to our national security has never been more important. Supporting a strong, committed and empowered local governance in Haiti is but one economically sensible tool at the disposal of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you very much for your comments. And now, we will go into questions, and I will start with myself and, then, the ranking member, and the other members that are here.

This question is for Mr. Esperance. Mr. Esperance, I give you a great deal of credit for speaking up on human rights in Haiti because you are living there now. And my question is, how concerned are you for your safety since they have so many gangs?

Mr. ESPERANCE. I believe that the work that I am doing is a challenge. I never think about my own security because I can move around and go where I want to go. But I think about the people who live in popular neighborhoods that are being massacred; they cannot go anywhere and they cannot move around as I can. Fighting for human rights in Haiti is not something that is easy. I have been a victim, as there are many threats, but I will keep on working. I will keep on doing my work.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

I visited Haiti I think 2 years ago. And one of the things that troubled me the most is when we met with the Prime Minister. He has spoken about reinstating the army. And to me, that was an indication that he is just not serious about taking care of his people. I cannot believe that an island that small or a place that small would need an army. I pointed out to him that Costa Rica does not have an army and they are doing well. I pointed out to him that I visited the police barracks, one of the police barracks, and they did not even have a table to sit on to have lunch. His answer was that the constitution of Haiti requires an army. Well, a constitution can be changed and the people come before anything else. So, if you are going to spend that money on creating an army, why not invest it in the needs of the people? I told him that I would never support any money for Haiti that goes to the army in this Congress. And the impression now that I get from everyone here is that this situation could get out of hand very quickly, and I am very concerned for the people of Haiti.

So, Mr. Erikson, if this situation gets out of hand quickly, who should step in? Because, obviously, there is corruption at the highest level. There are gangs roaming all over Haiti. Who steps in? I mean, I know you mentioned about the European Union and everybody else. They have got their issues. So, is it time for somebody else to step in?

Mr. ERIKSON. Thank you for the question, Mr. Chairman. A few point I would like to make.

The first is for a long time the United Nations had stepped in with the support of the U.S., Latin America, and others. And from 2004 to 2019, there was a U.N. peacekeeping force which was large at the beginning and, then, tailed off at the end. Now there is a smaller political mission, but there is no peacekeeping force in Haiti today, which is, I think, an important distinction from the past several years.

Second, what Haiti really needs is a functional Haitian National Police and a judicial system. In fact, the Haitian National Police has become—and there are still problems, admittedly—but it has become a more professionalized and larger force over the last 10 years with the support of the United States and with the support of the United Nations.



I do not think that the Haitian army is the correct approach for the Haitian government to take at this time.

Mr. SIRES. My concern—I hate to interrupt—

Mr. ERIKSON. Sure.

Mr. SIRES [continuing]. But my concern is I think Mr. Esperance pointed out that 41 police officers were killed this year. I mean, who would want to join the police department when you have this kind of atrocity going on?

Mr. ERIKSON. No, I mean, it is an excellent point. I think, in essence, what is required in Haiti right now is some sort of political solution that can alleviate the protests, restart the economy, and get some semblance of governance. And the concern I have right now is that solution is not going to emerge from Haiti's political actors without intensified international pressure and diplomatic engagement.

It is possible that what you allude to, basically, a larger breakdown that forces someone to step in—I cannot name who that would be, internationally or otherwise—could take place, but I think that is still preventable, but only if we get to political accord and the clock is ticking, because congress, most of it, will cease to be in office in Haiti in early January. And that is going to leave a President who is already extremely embattled ruling by decree without any broader sense of political legitimacy.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

I now go to the ranking member.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank you all.

Oh, does he have a question?

Mr. SIRES. Oh, I am sorry, sir.

Mr. YOHO. Yes, Okay.

Mr. ESPERANCE. Haiti does not need an army right now, and that is for many reasons. What we need is for the authorities to reinforce the police and also the judicial system. And if they give to the police the means to do their work, they can actually provide security inside the country.

Mr. SIRES. My time is up. I need to go to the other members. Thank you very much.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I appreciate everybody's testimony.

Dr. Garrastazu, go Gators. That is right. For everybody else that is not a Gator, sorry you could not get in.

Can I ask a question of the audience? How many people are from Haiti or lived in Haiti?

[Show of hands.]

Wow, that is a good representation.

I live in Florida. I represent Florida's 3d congressional District, where the University of Florida is. And I have lived in Florida since the early sixties. And Haiti has been an issue all that time. We have heard it referred to as a "sewer hole". I probably have said that myself over the years. And it was not President Trump that was the first to say that. We have heard this over and over again.

And, Ms. Hermantin, you brought up something that the chairman and I said before you spoke: the people of Haiti are hard-

working people. We have them in our State. We have them in our district, and I have known a lot of them. But, yet, there is that narrative out there that there is this problem with Haiti. I think, Mr. Erikson, you brought up that the world has become immune to Haiti because, you know, it is just Haiti; that is what Haiti does.

How do we change that narrative? And I have got the Foreign Affairs Committee Republicans' talking points: "The U.S. supports rule of law, adherence to the constitution, and promotion of democracy in Haiti."

Since approximately the last 10 years, we have invested \$3 billion as a nation—\$3 billion. And I hear this all the time through different countries: rule of law, lack of corruption build democracies, and we hear this over and over again. And I think, Ms. Hermantin, you brought it up. It is like a broken record. We say these things and we check them off because we feel good about it, but the results do not change on the ground.

And I ask, for the people of Haiti, how many have lived there or are from there? You are the ones, this is your country. What do we need to do to make a difference in Haiti that we have not done in the past? We can do another USAID project. Or what was their last thing: bring food over. How effective is bringing gross quantities of food, how effective is that to getting it out to the people that really need it?

Go ahead.

Ms. HERMANTIN. Well, bringing loads of food to the people is part of the structural issues that Haiti faces because Haiti is an agricultural nation—

Mr. YOHO. Right.

Ms. HERMANTIN [continuing]. Which produces food.

Mr. YOHO. And we are killing it.

Ms. HERMANTIN. But when you bring loads of rice, when you bring imported food, you destabilize—

Mr. YOHO. Exactly, and we know that. But, yet, policymakers or people that run these programs do not get it.

Ms. HERMANTIN. No.

Mr. YOHO. But, yet, it is a way for us to get it out there.

Let me go on to something because what I see, I heard somebody say, "I can get you to the dance floor; how well you learn to dance is up to you." We can bring these programs, but if we do not have somebody that is a leader in Haiti, that is willing to stand up and say, "I am going to do what is best for the people of Haiti," nothing is going to change.

Because I forget which one—I think it was you, Dr. Garrastazu—staying focused on local government, staying focused on youth, but if there is not stable government, if there is not rule of law, if there is not respect for the rule of law or respect for the individual human rights, you can do all that you want, but I am going to have to come back next year and help you do it again, and the next year.

We have to have somebody that is willing to stand up in Haiti, and the Haitian people need to demand this. We can support that movement, but we cannot do a top-down from America that says, "You need a democracy." I want a stable government in Haiti that is best for the Haitian people that we can work with, that will put what is best for the people.

Go ahead. You were going to say something?

Mr. GARRASTAZU. Thank you, Ranking Member.

No, absolutely agree. And I think for sustainability there needs to be political will; there need to be champions within the community to really bring this to bear. And I think strengthening the local institutions, working with the local governments who have the voice of the people, who see the people, where the people can actually see change, is very important. It is also very important to have these structures in place, so that health aid, or any other aid you want, has a better place from which to stand. So, these political champions I think are critical.

Mr. YOHO. I am running out of time, but I would love for all of you to triage it. We know what the problems are. We cannot fix them all at one time. We have to start somewhere, and it has to start with some basic things and has to be rule of law and respect for each other. And then, we can build from that, and we have to have the people on the ground that are willing to do that. Bring those people to us, so that we can help them, if that is what they want for Haiti.

Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congressman Espallat.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member.

I know that very often we Members of Congress like to exempt ourselves of any responsibilities and feel as though we have not been complicit in any of this, and that the problem in the Caribbean and Haiti like surfaced from nothing. But the fact of the matter is that, historically, we supported a dictatorship of Francois Duvalier. We supported a dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo Molina. And we have up until now, also, supported the colonial status of Puerto Rico. So, in fact, the crisis in the Caribbean is very much deep rooted in what we have done as a country in that important part of the world, which is considered our fourth border—our third border.

And so, my question is the following: given that the Miami Herald said that there are 500,000 illegal firearms circulating in Haiti, given that, also, the State Department cited that there are 286,000 children under the age of 15 working in what is considered domestic servitude, given that we just heard today that 41 police officers have been killed and 42 protestors have also been killed in the recent protests, Haiti is at the brink of disaster.

My question to all of you, and I would like to get a yes-or-no answer from each of the panelists: do you feel that the return of the Blue Helmets will stabilize or will help to stabilize the situation while we work on broader reform that must come before an election is held? The answer from each of the members, yes or no, do you feel that the Blue Helmets should come back?

Mr. Esperance, yes or no?

Mr. ESPERANCE. No.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. No? The answer is no? Thank you.

Ms. Douyon.

Ms. DOUYON. No. We do not need this. What we need is systemic reform and Haitians are able to handle—

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Yes or no, Mr. Erikson?

Mr. ERIKSON. Not at this point.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Ms. Hermantin?

Ms. HERMANTIN. No.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Garrastazu?

Mr. GARRASTAZU. No, not at this moment.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Okay. So, all of you feel that the Blue Helmets, although they may have contributed to help some level of stability while they were there, you do not feel they should come back at this critical time? Okay.

So, who are the members, Mr. Esperance, who are the individuals leading the armed gangs? Could you name them?

Mr. ESPERANCE. Well, listen, there are so many gangs, armed gangs in Haiti.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Yes, but who are the leaders? Could you name me the top three gang leaders? We should know them by name. We should be able to identify them.

Mr. ESPERANCE. For instance, Arnel Joseph in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince. He recently was imprisoned. They are Jimmy Cherizier, "Barbeque," who has been implicated in the five massacres and—

Mr. ESPAILLAT. And the third one, please? Sorry, I could not hear you.

Mr. ESPERANCE. He actually works for the government.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Okay. And the third one?

Mr. ESPERANCE. When we say that this is somebody who works for the government, it is not that he directly works for the government.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Okay. I wanted the names.

Now let me go to Ms. Douyon. You stated in your testimony that the President will not be able to complete his term in 2022. Why is that? Do you feel that there will be—that is totally impossible for him to complete his term? And what does that mean in real terms?

Ms. DOUYON. Just that the protests will keep on going because people are really dissatisfied with his ruling, and the economic situation has worsened under his term, and he has not taken any action to improve the situation. He has ruined any chance he has to have dialog, and the movement now is not a movement between the opposition and the President. It is about accountability, and we PetroChallengers, we will not accept that this President will represent us, because it is a shame; he is indicted in corruption, and we do not believe he deserves to stay in power and rule by decree alone without a parliament and without a government in January.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Vargas, do you have a question?

Congressman Levin.

He does not have a question.

Mr. LEVIN. [Speaks briefly in French.]

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Yoho, I thank you so much for holding this hearing and for the bipartisan engagement. It is really encouraging to me, and I can tell the witnesses and the audience that it is not going to be another 20 years before we have another hearing in this subcommittee under the leadership of Albio

Sires. We will pay close attention to this crisis and do everything we can to change things.

I have really been struck by your testimony today. I think 25 years ago I published a law review article that I think was read by 12 people, but the thesis of it was that United States policy has failed in Haiti because we only deal with a tiny slice of the population who speak French, the economic elite. In fact, we call them "civil society," and we have failed over many years to actually work with the broad groups of Haitian civil society—the neighborhood protection organizations, literacy organizations, the unions of teachers, whatever it is—the groups that, when he visited our country in the 19th century, Monsieur de Tocqueville said, were what set our country apart, not elections, but this effervescence of people organizing themselves.

And so, here today, Monsieur Esperance, Madame Douyon, Madame Hermantin, you basically all said, do not be obsessed with elections right now; we have had a lot of elections in Haiti and they failed to change things. Elections are constitutive of a democracy, and we need them, but, first, we need to work with the Haitian people in civil society to have accountability and have the rule of law.

So, let me start by asking Mr. Esperance to expand on—I was very troubled by your account of the status of the judiciary in Haiti. How endemic is the undermining of the independence of the judiciary and what could we do to begin to change that?

Mr. ESPERANCE. The judicial power is a power, but the executive branch and, also, the legislative branch consider the judiciary branch as a poor parent. There is not enough funds. There is not enough money for the reforms that are needed in the judicial branch.

The one thing that is important is the Superior Council for the Judiciary, which is an independent body. It is the judicial inspection. It does not exist. It does not have the means.

Well, indeed, as one of your colleagues, one of the Congressmen just mentioned, the United States spent billions of dollars in Haiti, but the results so far have been zero.

Mr. LEVIN. For this body?

Mr. ESPERANCE. They spent a lot of money for judicial reform. The problem is that the USAID and U.S. organizations, when they try to come up with these programs, they do not work with the actors on the ground. They do not work with the people they should work with.

As we are speaking right now, the U.S. Government has a big program when it comes to judicial reform. Meanwhile, the system has worsened. What we need is authorities who respect the judicial branch, so the branch itself can perform as it is supposed to.

It has been more than 30 years that I have been working on human rights issues. We have never gone through that situation that we are going through now for the past few years.

Mr. LEVIN. It has never been this past in the last 30? All right.

My time has expired. Mr. Chairman, I am going to hang out, in the hopes that I might get to ask some more questions when everyone else is tired. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congressman Buck.

Mr. BUCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would be glad to yield to my friend for a couple of minutes, if you would like to ask more questions right now.

Mr. LEVIN. I will wait.

Mr. BUCK. Okay. Then, I will yield to Mr. Yoho from Florida.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Ms. Douyon, you were getting ready to say something when we were talking about it before. We know how much money we have put in there. For Haiti to have less than 20 percent of the population have running water in the 21st century in the Western Hemisphere, I cannot comprehend that. And so, I want you to go ahead and answer what you were going to answer before. And then, let's talk about how do we fix this and make a significant impact, so we do not have this hearing next year and say, "USAID dropped some more food here, and thank you."

Ms. DOUYON. Thank you.

I wanted to add something about the judiciary system. The judiciary system is crippled by corruption like all the other institutions and it is not working for the people. On a recent trip in Paris, the President said that he had to hire 50 corrupted judges in the judiciary system. This is an example of how severe the situation is when a President confessed to hiring corrupt judges. So, no one can trust the judiciary system to serve the people. We only believe the judiciary system will protect the interests of those in power.

About the fact that most people do not have potable water in Haiti, this is a serious problem and it is another example of how people go to election just to have State resources, to live a lavish lifestyle, to share privilege with their friends, with their entourage, and not for the people.

Mr. YOHO. Okay. Let me interrupt you there. How do we change that? How do we get rule of law and respect for rule of law?

Ms. DOUYON. The way to do that is to actually foster systemic reforms, so that competent and honest people can go to election and run the country.

Mr. YOHO. All right. So how do you get rid of the corruption that prevents that?

Ms. DOUYON. One of the ways to get rid of it is to show that—like, for example, we are asking for a PetroCaribe trial. In the past, no one has faced charges for corruption, and the accountability movement, we want—

Mr. YOHO. Is there a political will in the people that are in government to carry that out? Are they willing to do that or are they afraid and intimidated?

Ms. DOUYON. They do not want to do that because so many high-level officials are indicted in corruption. Then, in the reports they want to protect themselves. So, they do not want this to happen.

Mr. YOHO. So, if they do not want to, how can you change that?

Ms. DOUYON. This is why we want the President to resign, because himself, he has indicted in corruption and we want to have a transitional government which will handle the PetroCaribe trial.

Mr. YOHO. In your opinion, if you have a transitional government, if he steps down, what guarantees or what certainty do you

have that you are going to have somebody that is going to really put the people of Haiti first?

Ms. DOUYON. We have this guarantee because of the accountability movement. Years ago, people like me, we were not on the street protesting for corruption. We are tired. We have had enough.

Mr. YOHO. I would think so.

I see my three colleagues in the back, they are smiling. So, they must be happy with what I am asking or they do not think it is going to happen.

Ms. DOUYON. It will happen because I do not think Haitians are ready to support any corrupt officials anymore. We have had enough. We have seen that it does not work, and that is why we are asking for—

Mr. YOHO. But when you have people in control that are corrupt, they are going to suppress you, right?

Ms. DOUYON. They are trying to suppress the movement.

Mr. YOHO. I think they have been doing it since I was a little kid, and that was a long time ago.

Ms. DOUYON. Yes.

Mr. YOHO. Because we have seen what has happened since the sixties.

The people of Haiti deserve to have the freedom and liberties that we have, that we believe in. We are all born with that innate quality. And if we do not change—and I want to talk to you, Mr. Erikson. You brought up the U.N. The U.N. was there for what, 12 years? Now they are small. How effective were they and what results do we—can we say, all right, the U.N. was here; they did this and look at the great results? Obviously, it is not water and sewer.

Mr. ERIKSON. Yes, you are absolutely right, Congressman. So, the U.N. was present in Haiti beginning in 2004 in the middle of another crisis, when President Aristide was ousted, and then, remained through the period of the earthquake, and really drew back the peacekeeping mission substantially in 2017 and transitioned to a political office in 2019.

The legacy of the U.N. in Haiti is very mixed. Clearly, there was success in maintaining the peace during that time, because Haiti did not have this widespread social civic breakdown that has taken place in the last couple of years. And there is a Haitian National Police, which Mr. Esperance referred to, which has become a more positive force, more accountable. It is bigger. There was about 5,000—

Mr. YOHO. I am going to run out of time here in 3 seconds.

Mr. ERIKSON. All right. There was 5,000 police in Haiti in 2010. Today, there is 15,000.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Congressman Castro.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman.

Dr. Garrastazu, you mentioned in your remarks that you believe that Haiti is a national security concern for the United States. How do you mean that?

Mr. GARRASTAZU. Thank you, Mr. Castro.

Well, its proximity to the U.S., being so close to my home State of Florida. Its geopolitical implications that I had mentioned; the

fact that they maintain a partnership with Taiwan is something to really consider because it is forcing China to keep away from our borders, which is very important right now. The Dominican Republic is working closely with China. El Salvador is just now working closely with China. Panama is working closely with China. And China is really all over Haiti, trying to dabble and trying to get them toward their sphere. That is something very important to consider.

And also, multilaterally, it is very important that Haiti for the past several years has always sided with CARICOM, with the regional block, and it is now taking a stance against Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, so something to consider. And they have also taken a stronger stance against the authoritarian government of Ortega in Nicaragua.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure. So, I guess your comment was geopolitical in nature?

Mr. GARRASTAZU. It is geopolitically and strategically correct.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure. No, and I understand. I just think that in the past we have seen migration from Haiti, folks seeking refuge and asylum in the United States. And oftentimes, when we receive people from nations like Haiti or Mexico or Central America, there is a language that develops around those people that can be harmful to the way Americans think about who these people are. We see it with Central American migrants now where there is an effort—and I am not including you in that—I am just saying there is an effort to try to make these people out to be dangerous or people that we should fear. And again, I am not saying that is your intention.

But Haiti has confronted, has dealt in the past with what I would consider bad U.S. foreign policy posture; also leaders who did not serve the people of Haiti, but served themselves, and also natural disasters, the most recent of which, the 2010 earthquake, the country, they lost somewhere between 100,000, maybe 250,000, people that they are still trying to rebuild from. And so, I ask that and I certainly respect your answer on the geopolitics and the significance, and the challenge that China poses in the Caribbean and Latin America. But I also want us to be mindful that when people, whether in the past or in the future, seek asylum here, that most of all they are coming in desperation, oftentimes oppression, and are not dangerous people in and of themselves.

Mr. GARRASTAZU. Oh, yes, sir. And coming from the State of Florida, I think I have a unique perspective on that. My family is Cuban-American.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure.

Mr. GARRASTAZU. So, they have been here since 1960 and really have contributed to what south Florida is today. Growing up with Haitians, with Venezuelans, with Mexicans, I know the positive impact that they can have on the community. And I think I am also one of those prospects. My family came, worked really hard, and I am sitting before Congress today, which is very cool.

But understand there needs to be a change of narrative as well as the positive aspects of what they are doing. For example, what is going on in Venezuela and Colombia with the migration crisis, Venezuelans are really putting forth a lot in that community. So,



we need to really speak about that positive aspect as well—it is not just negative—and the contributions they can make to society.

Mr. CASTRO. Yes. Thank you.

I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. SIRES. Congressman Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Yoho, for calling this very important hearing.

Thank you for your testimoneys.

Let me just focus for a moment on the issue of anti-human trafficking, both labor and sex trafficking. More than a decade ago, I met with a woman named Nancy Rivard, an airline flight attendant with American Airlines. And she and others recognized, coming out of Haiti, that there were a number of children who were basically unaccompanied except by some guy that just did not look like there was a relationship whatsoever, and contacted law enforcement.

And, lo and behold, they found out there was a trafficking ring, a pedophile ring, of huge proportions. Over 60 children had been trafficked. When they got law enforcement involved, they were able to stop it, make arrests. But the 60-plus kids that had been so horribly mistreated were still lost into a terrible system.

I actually wrote a law, the Frederick Douglass Act that was signed into law earlier this year, on anti-human trafficking. I also wrote the original Trafficking Victims Protection Act. But the Douglass Act has specific language in it, and it was born out of what we learned from Nancy Rivard and others, that gives prioritization to U.S. use of airlines for Federal employees, if they have a protocol in place to spot trafficking, to be situationally aware.

So, I would like to ask you, if you could, where are we in terms of the Haitian government and its record? The TIP Report this year upgraded Haiti to Tier 2. It had been much worse off for years. They do have a new national plan, as you know, that is in effect. Although the recommendations from our Trafficking in Persons Office is that they prioritize that national plan, they underscore the fact that there needs to be the training of police, prosecutors, judges; that there is a great deal of non-information/misinformation about the nature of trafficking. So, it is not prioritized by law enforcement. Even training of labor investigators, so that they can look for labor trafficking, both in Haiti and those that are sent elsewhere.

If you could speak to the issue of trafficking, whoever might want to take it, or several of you? Is Haiti moving in the right direction? The TIP Report suggests, yes, but they are nowhere near where they ought to be to protect the children of Haiti as well as women and others who are exploited.

Ms. DOUYON. I know that efforts have been made to tackle this issue, but I will say that this is all part of a bigger problem, which is impunity, weakness of law enforcement, and worsening economic conditions. And to solve this problem, we need to get to the root cause and prevent officials from diverting money that is meant to fight poverty and allow parents to have the resources to raise their kids so they will not be that exposed to human trafficking.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Yes?

Ms. HERMANTIN. From the perspective of the Haitian-American community in Miami, for example, we know, neighborhood-based organizations such as the one I work with, that there are a lot of young people who are living in deplorable conditions within households in the Haitian community. These are the children who migrated, who are sent by parents. Again, because of the economic situation, they were sent for themselves and to take care of their families back home.

But these young people are in a semi-state of servitude. Thank God they go to school, but they live in really horrible conditions at home, and social service agencies try their best to attend to their needs because this is sort of the route to gang activity in urban centers in Miami. So, we do notice that there are such situations, it is clearly documented, but we have no power over what happens in Haiti.

Mr. SMITH. Yes?

Mr. ESPERANCE. All this issue of human trafficking, it occurs with the absence of the rule of law. Today in Haiti, human life does not have any importance or the authorities. What we need is a strong State where all the institutions are working and they are doing exactly what they are supposed to do, like a well-healed machine. There is no real effort on the side of the authorities to address these issues and to resolve them.

Even if the current President you have now had the opportunity to finish his term in 2022, there is no opportunity to really have elections with him that can be credible. In other words, Haiti will have to go through a transition, no matter what. And so, during that transition we will be able to address all those issues, impunity, the question of the rule of law, and so forth.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Esperance, thank you very much. Thank you all. I think my time is up.

Mr. SIRES. Congressman Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Mr. Yoho, for calling this hearing.

And welcome to our witnesses. Bonjour et bienvenue.

The failures of the Haitian political system have been well documented, not just for generations, but literally over two centuries, I think it is fair to say. And we have a tendency to try to treat symptoms and not address underlying disease. I think that underlying disease is surely corruption, as we have spoken about briefly today. So, I would like to start with that.

Ms. Douyon, you spoke briefly about it, but I would like some specifics about how the United States of America can use its resources, both financial and human, to start taking steps to improve governance, restore the faith and trust in government, and address the underlying disease.

Ms. DOUYON. Thank you.

If the U.S. wants to support a sustainable way forward, like I said, it may take its lead from the Haitians of its society. You mentioned it. We are treating the symptom. We are going to the root to do a cause of the problem. And now, the problem is that we want to fight corruption and get rid of corrupt officials.

And the steps are: get this government to resign. Have the PetroCaribe trial. Make reforms.

Mr. PHILLIPS. So, step one is getting the government to resign?

Ms. DOUYON. Yes, because there is no way a corrupt President can do any good for this country, except protecting himself.

Mr. PHILLIPS. So, working with Moise and his government is a non-start?

Ms. DOUYON. It is impossible. It is morally impossible as well.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. No. 2?

Ms. DOUYON. And we need to get a trial, and we need to get constitutional reform, change in the electoral system, so we can have fair and open elections.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Let's stop there for a moment.

Ms. DOUYON. Yes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. How do we begin that initiative?

Ms. DOUYON. With a transitional government with a clear mandate. There are actually civil society organizations who are working on a roadmap for the transitional government.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay.

Ms. DOUYON. And there is a general consensus on what this transitional government should do. And the priorities are the trial and elections, fair, open election with a new electoral system, a new electoral council, because the one we have now cannot organize an election. It does not respect the legal rule and I think its term is over as well. Therefore, we need those basic changes, so we can have honest people, competent people to run for office and enter a new system. We need systemic reforms and we definitely need it now.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Is anything that the United States is doing right now affecting any of those three initiatives?

Ms. DOUYON. Stop supporting the Moise government because the way it is, the U.S. Government is encouraging dialog and it does not work. There is no way we can have dialog with a corrupt President who has ruined any chances he had to have dialog. Even when it was not about his resignation, he ruined it.

The United States is pushing to the formation of a new government. It will not work. We cannot ask people to enter a government with a corrupt President and direct it in corruption. There is no way we can ask people to do that.

And he had a chance with a Prime Minister from the opposition, Mr. Ceant, and he would not. So, he has had two governments and it did not work. He had the majority in the parliament. Yet, he could not form a government. There is no way we can trust him to handle anything.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. I appreciate it.

Mr. Erikson, I would like to talk about our diplomacy in Haiti. Are staff drawdowns affecting—as I presume the answer is yes—our ability to affect diplomacy and do our business, if you will, in Haiti?

Mr. ERIKSON. The U.S. Embassy in Haiti is functioning in an extremely challenging environment in terms of security. In terms of the staff footprint, I do not know if there have been many changes, but there have been periods where people, for example, have not been able to have their family members there with them.

And then, I would just say, in general, there has been fewer visitors. There have been a few high-level visitors recently, but you are not seeing perhaps the level of diplomatic attention from Washington, either.

Mr. PHILLIPS. And what would that level of diplomatic attention look like in a perfect world?

Mr. ERIKSON. Sure. Well, one of the proposals that I made in my testimony is to have the Secretary of State convene in the first quarter of next year all of the key international actors engaged with Haiti, which is known as the Haiti Core Group, which includes countries from Europe, Latin America, Canada, and international institutions, to try to lay out what a framework would be for the international community to help assist with a political solution and, also, address the humanitarian needs.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I yield the balance of my time.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Congressman Vargas.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Yoho. In fact, Mr. Yoho said that we have to respect the rule of law; we have to have the rule of law, and are we willing to carry it out?

So, this Saturday my oldest daughter and I, we drove to Tijuana to the area called El Chaparral, where people present themselves for asylum. Now the law is such that a person fleeing from persecution should be able to go up to the American side of the border, present themselves, and then, ultimately, have their case adjudicated to see if they have legitimate fear to be able to, then, gain asylum and stay in the United States.

Now there are a number of people that were there, and there is this queuing system that prevents people from actually doing that. So, you physically literally cannot get to the American side of the border and ask for that because you are prevented from doing that by this fence that has been put up by the Mexican government, in conjunction with the American government.

The American government, we only allow a few people. In fact, there is this book that they have and they only call a few people from it. And there was this beautiful couple that turned out to be from Haiti. It was a husband, a wife, and a little girl. And I could not help but think at this time of the year of another family 2,000 years ago that was looking for refuge that I think had a great case, and I think here also. But they never even had the opportunity.

In fact, there was someone there, thankfully, who was able to explain to them you have to put your name on this list, and maybe 6 months down the line, or 4 months down the line, your name will be called. You have to come here to hear your name. Then, you can apply for asylum.

Well, we should follow our own law. We should be willing to respect the rule of law. That family should have had the opportunity to present themselves and make their case for asylum. Under the conditions that you are talking about today, I think that family would have made a great case to say, "We fear for our lives. We fear for our livelihood. We fear for the child that we have with us

here,” and be able to stay in the United States under our law. But we are not willing to do that.

So, when we hear about this notion that people should be able to follow the rule of law and we should respect the rule of law, we should begin by respecting our own rules, our own laws, and allowing that little family to be able to present themselves appropriately, as they wanted to. They did not even know it—now, again, it gets more complicated because they did not speak Spanish and they did not speak English—so, they did not even know how to do this when they showed up. Again, I think we should respect the rule of law.

That being said, I mean, I am very much in favor, of course, of us providing greater assistance to Haiti. We have to do that. I am in favor of that. I know there is corruption and there is a lot of other things. There always is in the world. But, at the same time, we should respect our own laws, our own rules, because we know that this is going to happen around the world. That is why we have always been a refuge for people seeking this type of help, this type of asylum. That is how most of the people probably in this room got here.

And so, again, we should respect our own rule of law. We should respect our own rules and give an opportunity. We should look at that, Mr. Chairman. There is a grave injustice happening along the border, especially for people that do not speak Spanish or English.

And I have to say, too, my daughter, the reason she was with me, she works at Casa Cornelia, which attempts to get asylum for people that arrive in—it began with girls and women, and now families, that have been trafficked. And how, they are seeking asylum.

In particular, I think people of African descent get discriminated against. They are coming through a nation that is Mexican, obviously, that speaks Spanish. And oftentimes, they do not know the language, Cameroonians especially, in particular. But we should respect our own rule of law.

So, again, I am very much in favor of us helping Haiti, and I am here to listen. But, at the same time, I am also here to say we are not doing it. We are very good to cast aspersions on other countries; they should follow the rule of law. We do not do it. We do not follow the international law. We do not follow our own rules.

Mr. Erikson, what do you think about it? I mean, do not you think the conditions exist there to be able to apply for asylum here for some people with a legitimate reason?

Mr. ERIKSON. Yes, I do. And I really appreciate your commentary and observations.

One of the recommendations that I made in my testimony was the extension of Temporary Protected Status for Haitians in the United States past the current 2021 expiration date and the examination of possibilities for humanitarian parole for maybe Haitians or political asylum for those whose lives are at serious risk.

Mr. VARGAS. And I hope we do it.

My time has expired here. But, again, I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity.

Mr. SIRES. Congressman Meeks.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this very important hearing today.

And I thank all the panel members who are sitting there and my colleagues.

As you may know, yesterday myself and eight other Members of Congress, many of whom are sitting on the dais today, wrote to Secretary Pompeo and Administrator Green to express our deep concern regarding the prolonged political and humanitarian crisis in Haiti. We know that people are dying on a daily basis, some because of no food, others because of the violence that has taken place.

And what I am trying to find out, and according to the State Department, U.S. policy toward Port-au-Prince focuses, they tell me, on strengthening institutions and infrastructure for sustainable development and democratic foundations and poverty alleviation. So, that is what we were told by the State Department.

So, my question would be, then, to you initially, since most of you or all of you have been on the ground and looking, just to ask you, what is the perception among Haitians of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. assistance to Haiti?

Yes?

Ms. DOUYON. The perception is that the U.S. Embassy is supporting the President, and the President does everything he can to show that he has the strong support of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Government. And we believe that the answer from the embassy to the PetroCaribe movement, for example, isn't as strong as it should be. It is the very first time that there is a strong accountability movement in the country, and it does not receive the recognition it should.

The response is better on the human rights side because they condemned the last massacre and all, but they have been mainly calling for dialog, which I mentioned before is not possible. They have been calling for the formation of a new government, which people do not believe is the solution because the government, the President is corrupt and other people he appointed before have like corruption suspicion upon them. And they have been calling for election, but I think my colleague mentioned it before, we have the Dermalog scandal related to the identification called the voter cards. It did not respect the rule. It did not have the validation from the Court of Auditors, and it does not help to promote elections with a government that is using an illegal card, basically, to have this election.

And it seems like they are pushing for election either way, whether it is a fair election or not. It is like we are promoting, the U.S. is supporting democracy, but not democracy itself, but sign of democracy, as long as we have a government, no matter the way it was formed. No matter the type of people in this government, it is democracy. No matter the kind of election we have, as long as we have an election to prove that we are respecting democracy, it is Okay. But we are tired of this and we believe we should not keep going this way because it isn't better.

Mr. MEEKS. It is your feeling that there should not be any cooperation with the Moise government because they could not have a fair and democratic election. And I just want to check to make

sure that everybody on the panel feels the same way. Do they think that is accurate? Or is there any way to engage, but make sure that we do have a fair and impartial election?

Ms. HERMANTIN. Thank you.

The idea of fair and democratic elections, also a construct that is not necessarily well implemented in Haiti. Let's look at how these elections are funded. How are individuals incentivized to run for office, to create parties? Before elections, you have parties just pop up out of nowhere because people know that elections will come with funding. Each party—if I am wrong, please let me know—each person or each party that presents candidates will receive some funding from the international community. So, this obsession with the electoral process, one-man/one-vote elections, has created a cottage industry of bogus parties that come up and that attract not the most civic-minded people to come and run.

So, when we have elections where we have 75 individuals representing 75 parties running for office, someone should say, what is wrong with this picture? What monster have we created, all in the name of, quote/unquote, “democracy”?

And so, the incentivization of politics or elections has sort of created this monster that attracts sometimes the worse elements that we have to offer. So, the idea that you have elections and that is proof that democracy is healthy in Haiti is not really accurate. You cannot say that, well, we have elections, so everything should be Okay. Why cannot you attract the right people? The process itself attracts the wrong people.

Ms. DOUYON. And if I may add something?

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. We have four other guests.

Congresswoman Frederica Wilson from Florida?

Ms. WILSON. Thank you, Chairman Sires, and thank you for holding this hearing. This is long overdue.

And I am pleased to have my constituent and Haitian community leader, Leonie Hermantin, testify today. And I asked you to invite her to testify at this hearing because my district is home to one of the Nation's largest Haitian communities, which I have had the privilege of representing in Congress and in the Florida legislature.

In October, Leonie and other Haitian community leaders joined Speaker Pelosi and me for a roundtable on Haiti. And one of those panelists, Attorney Karen Andre, who worked in the Obama Administration, is in the audience. Raise your hand, Karen.

Generations of Haitians passionately expressed their heartfelt concerns about the ongoing crisis. They were livid. They made it abundantly clear that Haiti's sovereignty and right to self-determination must not be undermined. They also shared concerns about the Trump Administration's continued support for President Moïse and inadequate calls for accountability for the myriad of grievances that have compelled Haitians to take to the streets and march and protest.

We cannot remain silent when there are credible allegations of corruption, human rights abuses, and other atrocities. We cannot remain silent when thousands of ambitious Haitian children, especially young girls, are unable to access an education, which is their only ladder of opportunity. And we cannot remain silent when

more than 3 million Haitians are facing a hunger crisis. We must speak up and we must listen.

That is why today's hearing is so important and so timely. We have had the opportunity to hear directly from Haitians who are living in Haiti and in the diaspora, and united in fighting for a stronger, more prosperous Haiti. Their testimonies have given us valuable insight about the impact of U.S. policies on Haiti.

And the Miami Herald editorial board said that we must invest in Haiti. The international community must invest in Haiti. We have to do something and not just listen. I heard Mr. Erikson, and we need to listen, direct, and we need to act.

I hope this is just the first of many congressional hearings on Haiti. For too long, there have been no hearings on Haiti.

Thank you, Chairman Sires, for listening to us and engaging.

Ms. Hermantin, thank you for traveling from Miami and for your continued leadership in the Haitian community.

You portrayed the Haitian diaspora as an underutilized asset and recommended that the U.S. work in partnership with the Haitians locally and diaspora experts, as opposed to the big international development organizations. How should USAID and other U.S. agencies demonstrably leverage the expertise of the Haitian diaspora to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. investments in Haiti? And what do you consider as a suitable mechanism to facilitate this kind of partnership that you envision?

Ms. HERMANTIN. Thank you for the question. I often dread talking about USAID from the diaspora's perspective because we have seldomly seen a willingness to fully engage the Haitian diaspora. We, as I said, invest \$3.1 billion in Haiti, and yet, we are never invited as partners, as investors around the table when it comes to creating programs that target us.

There was a program right after the earthquake called the Haitian Diaspora Marketplace. It was a 2-year program and its goal was to provide financial and technical assistance to members of the Haitian diaspora, but it was led from a bank in Haiti and it was supposed to give technical assistance to people who live in the United States. So, it really did not make too much sense and it really did not work very well. It was not very successful.

There was another effort called LEAD. Again, its goal was to attract investment in small and medium-sized enterprises based in Haiti, but it was implemented by one of these large organizations. Again, that did not successfully engage us.

The idea is you put in lots of lip service to programs engaging the diaspora, but if you do not engage us, if you do not come to us, come to find us and talk to us, it is not going to work.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. Thank you. Can I just get to the other member?

Ms. HERMANTIN. Oh, sorry.

Mr. SIRES. They were waiting long.

Congresswoman Lee.

Ms. LEE. First, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this hearing. I am formally a member for many years of this committee, the full committee and subcommittee. So, thank you so much for inviting us back to be here with you.



Once again, I just have to say my heart continues to ache for the people of Haiti. And I want to associate myself with many of the remarks that have been made today.

Now, for many years, myself personally, since the seventies, I have worked in a variety of ways to support the Haitian people and have, of course, visited Haiti many times prior to my being a Member of Congress and now serving as a Member of Congress.

Let me just frame this within a couple of perspectives. I am vice chair of the subcommittee that funds all of our foreign aid, USAID. So, thank you for your response on the question from Congresswoman Wilson.

But we have helped spearhead and guide the humanitarian U.S. assistance efforts after the deadly earthquake. We have worked to improve and strengthen health care. We supported efforts to strengthen governance, and we have always stood to protect the human rights of the Haitian people. We have ensured funding for emergency assistance through USAID, ensuring that that is available, and we included important language in the appropriations bill requiring a report on the La Saline massacre, including the human rights abuses. We have also required our government to condition funding for the central government of Haiti on human rights abuses and governance issues.

The ongoing political and economic crisis in Haiti has led to, we all know, as you have said, a food crisis. Schools and businesses are being shut down for weeks, vital resources becoming scarce.

I share that because there are many, many efforts that all of us have mounted, and then, still, we see what has taken place in Haiti. In many ways, it appears to be a failed state.

Now I am one to believe that the U.S.'s role has not been a very positive role, laying out everything I just laid out and more, because of the structural issues and because of our history of undermining in many respects the Haitian people in terms of their freedom, their liberation, and the empowerment of the Haitian people.

I know for a fact that a lot of the USAID money has gone to NGO's that are not Haitian NGO's. None of the Haitian businesses in the diaspora, as you said, have been brought to the table.

And so, I am wondering, first of all, what do you think we can do here as Members of Congress, in addition to what we have done, to address the structural issues and to make sure that the United States becomes a positive actor in this? And then, second, as it relates to the incidences, the massacre really in La Saline, what is the status of that? Has anyone been brought to justice? Has anyone been prosecuted in that massacre?

Mr. ESPERANCE. Like I mentioned earlier, all financial crimes or other kinds of crimes that have been committed, the Haitian government has blocked the kinds of investigation at the judicial level. In other words, if you consider the foul on the La Saline massacre, there has not been any indictment that has been issued and the criminals are going about their business without any problem. One of the gangs with Jimmy Cherizier that was involved in that massacre is continuing to act the same way in other massacres.

Earlier, the question was asked about the Haitian perception of the U.S. Embassy in Haiti. We can see from 2017 up until March 2019 U.S. authorities have given unquestionable support to the

Haitian authorities. With the letter signed by 104 Congressman that was delivered in March of this year to the embassy, the embassy has begun to shift, to modify in some of these fouls; for instance, La Saline.

U.S. authorities are putting a lot of pressure against a lot of people who are demonstrating against the government in power. They cancel a lot of the visas of many of them and they also apply a lot of pressure on them.

In the meantime, Haitian authorities who are involved in money laundering, they are being protected. They never do anything against them. There is no sanction against them.

Recently, the OAS and the government have come up with a program to try and cleanup corruption within the government.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congresswoman Pressley.

Mr. ESPERANCE. Thirty seconds, 30 seconds?

Mr. SIRES. All right, go ahead. Finish up.

Mr. ESPERANCE. If the U.S. Government puts its money in that program, it is going to be a waste. It is going to be wasting money. It is true that they want to reinforce the institutions that are fighting against corruption, but you have to do it with authorities, with people who are not corrupt, with authorities that are destroying these institutions like your current authorities are doing right now.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. I do not mean to cut you off, but we have other members that have been waiting for a long time.

Congresswoman Pressley.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for waving me onto the committee for this critically important conversation today.

I am here for two reasons, one in my official capacity as the Congresswoman representing the Massachusetts 7th congressional District, which boasts the third-largest population of the Haitian diaspora in the country. But I am also here, if I am being fully authentic, as a black woman in gratitude. A parent is a child's first teacher. My mother did not read me nursery rhymes, but she made sure early on that I knew the words of Toussaint Louverture, "I was born a slave, but Nature gave me the soul of a free man."

The people of Haiti inspired me in my lifetime of work to fight against the colonialism and for the liberation and freedom of black people and all people around the globe. And I thank you for that role.

I also proudly boast the only pre-K, dual-language program in the country in the Toussaint L'Ouverture Academy; and finally, trail-blazing, historic Haitian-American leaders like Marie St. Fleur, Linda Dorcena Forry, Jean Bradley Derenoncourt, and Gerly Adrien, elected more recently.

So, what is happening in Haiti is of specific and urgent import to the people that I represent, dealing with the fact that they cannot travel back to the funerals of their loved ones due to the violence; the fact that students cannot go to school; that hospitals do not have enough oxygen for critically ill patients seeking care.

Just last month, I held a roundtable with Haitian stakeholders in my district to hear directly from them about how the violence has impacted their families and how the U.S. can play a role in helping to forge a path for long-term peace and stability for the

people of Haiti. They stressed the need for security measures to keep their loved ones in Haiti safe and strong accountability measures to prevent fraud and to hold bad actors to account.

Some of my line of questioning has already been asked. So, I just have a couple of things with the time that I have remaining. The first is, can you speak to how has the closing of the USCIS field office in Port-au-Prince affected the situation in Haiti? Anyone who would like to comment on that?

Mr. ESPERANCE. I am not sure this program really helped a lot of Haitians. It was a program that was established to help people who were applying for political asylum and, also, to bring family members.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Okay.

Mr. ESPERANCE. There is not a lot of people who are applying nowadays for political asylum because what the U.S. Government has done is make it so that it takes much longer, like 3 years-four years before you actually get even an interview.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Okay. All right. Thank you.

And then, did you want to elaborate?

Ms. DOUYON. I want to add something, but not exactly related to your question, but related to the introduction you made. My friends, my colleagues in the PetroChallenge movement, the movement for accountability, we follow you closely in Haiti and we are inspired by those women in Congress here in the United States. And one of our concerns is that in Haiti we cannot do the same and women cannot run for office as easily as it is done elsewhere because, to win an election in Haiti, you need support from a gang and you need dirty money.

And here, I will take the opportunity to say this is also one of the reasons we are having this movement, because in the future we would like to see people like you playing this role, taking a role in parliament and help the country, just like you are doing here.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you.

To that point, are there any leaders of the opposition that you could name? And could you speak to how a transitional government could actually—how do we ensure that that does not contribute to the chaos and actually does get Haiti on a pathway to peace?

Ms. DOUYON. I think the first way will be to ensure that civil society plays a really strong role instead of dealing with the crisis as a crisis between the President and the opposition. Because the youth, the people from the accountability movement, we do not believe that all those politicians who will want to present to resign are actually fit to replace him or to be in charge of the country.

We want to take the process really seriously and have a vetting. We do not want any corrupt officials, whether it is from the opposition or from the government party, to be in place. And we think that society, the youth, the PetroChallengers have to play a key role if we want to move forward and avoid chaos.

We do not want chaos. We do not want an opponent to just replace the President. It is not about taking power and just keep mining their own business. It is about changing our country. It is about doing something new. It is about finally taking Haiti away from this mess, if I can say it this way.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Talking about strong women, Congresswoman Waters.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much.

First, allow me to thank my colleague, Chairman Albio Sires, for organizing this hearing entitled, "Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis," and for inviting me to participate. Haiti is, indeed, a country in crisis and we are long overdue for an honest assessment of the policies of the United States toward Haiti as this crisis has developed.

In April of this year, I led a delegation to Haiti which met with residents of the La Saline neighborhood of Haiti's capital and surrounding areas who described acts of unconscionable violence that occurred in November 2018. The La Saline massacre resulted in the deaths of at least 71 civilians, in addition to the rape of at least 11 women and the looting of more than 150 homes. Survivors expressed concern that government-connected gangs, working with police officers, carried out the attacks to punish La Saline for participation in anti-government protests.

Now what are these protests all about? We cannot escape dealing with the reality of why people are in the streets. And I have to disclose that I have supported Haiti in so many ways for so many years, and I am a big supporter still of Lavalas. President Aristide is not involved in this. He has a university that is doing fine. But these massive demonstrations must be talked about in realistic ways.

These protests were sparked by the disappearance of millions of dollars of assistance provided to Haiti by Venezuela under the PetroCaribe program. Through PetroCaribe, Venezuela sold oil to Haiti and allowed them to defer the payments for up to 25 years and pay a low rate of interest on the debt. Haiti was supposed to sell the oil and use the money to pay for social programs.

Instead, at least \$2 billion went missing. That is almost a quarter of Haiti's total economy for 2017. A government report delivered to the Haitian Senate by official auditors on May 31st highlighted the corruption. Haitians began demonstrating against the government because they knew they never saw the benefits of the PetroCaribe program.

Now, having said that, our government tends to support whomever is the President, whoever is the leader of Haiti, no matter what. I have been through this through so many Presidents starting with Papa Doc and Baby Doc, Preval, Martelly, Latortue, and now, Moise.

I do not know why this President cannot be responsible, along with Martelly, for the accountability of the PetroCaribe money. The demonstrations are not going to stop. And for those who go down there and who send messages, "Everybody ought to get together and they need to come together and they need to talk about this," there is not going to be any talk. The demonstrations are going to go on until this President either comes forward and gives some accountability for what has happened to this money, and he can bring Martelly along with him. Because you all sitting there know what is going on.

In addition to that, if he cannot do that, they are going to demand that he steps down. Now we understand Haiti is a sovereign

nation. We cannot tell it what to do, but the United States and USAID, and everybody that is holding up Moise and Martelly and others who are responsible for this money, need to come out and talk about this issue.

Ladies and gentleman, the problem is governance. People like to take food and they like to take clothing, and they like to support these non-government agencies, but that is not what we ought to be doing. We ought to be doing everything that we can to call for accountability.

I want to tell you again, I have been through all of this. I love Haiti. I support it. I know that governance is needed. And do not forget, I have been through when President Aristide was exiled twice, and Clinton got him back once. And then, the last time he came back, I went and got him in the Central African Republic. We rented a plane and went up and brought him back. And he stayed in Africa until he came back. When Baby Doc came back, he came back. So, we know this history and we know the history of everybody taking advantage of Haiti whenever they have the opportunity.

So, what we need to do is put pressure on the President. The President has not come out. He has not talked about what is going on. He has not tried to answer anybody. All that he has done, in my estimation, is been responsible for some of the violence as he tried to quiet the people of La Saline. And many of them are Lavalas, not all of them, but many of them are. And I support the idea that they can demand from this President and this government accountability.

So, having said all of that, we should stand ready to support whatever needs to be done for a transitional government, whatever needs to be done for elections. There is no judiciary in Haiti at this point. We need to help get governance in order in every way that we possibly can.

But, for those of you here today, this issue really cannot be resolved until the President takes responsibility. And our position in supporting this President is a failed position. It is not a good position.

With that, I think I have taken up all of my time. But who on this panel agrees that there needs to be accountability from the President of Haiti?

[Applause.]

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Congresswoman.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SIRES. We are going to go a second round. There are a couple of members who have a couple of questions.

Congressman Levin.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to take a few minutes in closing to, first of all, recognize the leadership of some of my sisters who appeared before us here, and to note that it is not altogether common for multiple Members of Congress who have simultaneous hearings going on to come and wave onto a subcommittee, Chairman Sires, to speak about this. So, I want you to understand how much we care about Haiti and how intent we are for our country at long last to take a more responsible and constructive position. Congresswoman

Waters, Congresswoman Lee, Congresswoman Pressley, Congresswoman Wilson all came here. So, I want to note that.

Now, Ms. Douyon, let me just pick up something that you emphasized in your testimony. I am very concerned that there is a notion afoot, and has been for a long time, that Haiti is sort of a hopelessly failed state and that it is impossible for Haiti to stand up a government based on the rule of law and democracy. And I think that is a racist notion.

I think it is a notion based on hundreds of years of colonialism going back to, well, back to when Haiti was a colony. But for the many years that France, after Haiti had the only successful national-level slave rebellion in history and kicked out Napoleon's army, France actually said Haiti had stolen its property; namely, themselves and their own land, and demanded reparations. And the U.S. supported this position. Obviously, I do not need to recite the whole history here.

But let's talk about how we would actually step by step gather together the organizations of the civil society, stand up a transitional government, and move toward a new era of real sort of bottom-up democracy in Haiti. How do you see that happening? What are the steps we need to go through?

Ms. DOUYON. Thank you.

First of all, I think even if now Haiti is a failed state, we are not condemned to being a failed state forever.

Mr. LEVIN. Amen.

Ms. DOUYON. And you mentioned Taiwan here, and I am lucky enough to have received a scholarship to study in Taiwan. I have studied for four and a half years, and I have studied how Taiwan went from poverty to the state they are now. This is a very inspiring story, and I do not see what prevents Haiti from doing the same, except for corrupt officials and the fact that the international community is always somehow supporting them. Because we all know that those people are not using the foreign assistance, for example, to conduct the projects they were supposed to do. But, still, they give them more money.

History has been written now. For example, the U.S. has supported the dictatorship of Duvalier, and now it is being perceived that we are supporting a corrupt President, the first one to be indicted while he is in power and the first one to have so many people taking to the street to ask for his resignation.

In fact, we have plans for our country. They are so many groups from civil society, the youth, working on a plan, for 30 years, a development plan, for Haiti. The other one that has done the fight against the dictatorship, they are here; they want to help. There are so many people committed to fighting corruption and to build a new country now, and we need to invest in key priorities.

Haiti needs to be able to identify the priorities. We do not need the solutions that are easy for NGO's to run, like just distributing food aid. This is not helping. We cannot feed 2.6 million people forever. Food security, we will not solve it by distributing food. We need to strengthen the agricultural sector. We need to invest in education.

People who have studied abroad, a lot of people from my generation, we have studied abroad. We are qualified. Yet, we cannot an-

swer the public administration because it is crippled by corruption. There is no way; they will not let us do anything there.

This is what we want to change. We want to let people give those people the opportunity to serve. We need to trust the civil society. We need to trust the PetroChallengers. We need to trust those people who do not want to give up on Haiti now, those people who do not want to leave the country.

I could have left Haiti. I could have come here. Canada is actually——

Mr. LEVIN. I am sure you would be very successful here, just based on your performance this morning.

Ms. DOUYON. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. LEVIN. No kidding.

Ms. DOUYON. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Like Canada is attracting all our qualified Haitians. The brain drain is really severe. Like if you have a Master's degree, at some point you get tired and you leave. We do not want this. We want Haitians to serve Haiti, and we can just trust those people from the civil society.

And after that, we fight gang violence because they will not let us just change this country. They will fight for their interests. They are smuggling merchandise on the border. They are having State contracts and it is a lot of contracts. They will not let it happen that easily. This is why we need support, and this is why we need, also, for the international community to believe that we can decide what is good for ourselves and we can find a Haitian-led solution to this crisis.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congressman Meeks.

Mr. MEEKS. Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this very, very important hearing.

I listened to my colleague from Massachusetts, and I think New York is the second-largest number of Haitians. In Queens, I have a tremendous amount.

And I would be remiss if I did not say that, of course, anybody that is from African-American origin owes a deep debt of gratitude for the leaders of Haiti who decided that they were not going to be slaves and made sure that they wanted to be free.

I also would be remiss if I did not say that one of the greatest frustrations that I have had in the 21 years that I have been a Member of the U.S. Congress is the fact that, for some reason, one way or the other, we seem not to have gotten Haiti right, because the situation has not changed. We have had hopes at certain times after elections with certain Presidents. We thought that we were on a good path. And one way or another, something has happened, whether it is corruption that takes place, whether the policies of the United States, the money is going to the wrong place.

I know in my own district, to a large part, it is divided, depending upon who I talk to. One says to do one thing, that I should be doing one thing as a Member of Congress, and another group says I should be doing something else that is absolutely wrong. But we are trying to figure out how to do it.

I think, ultimately, the power does rest, when I listen to you, Ms. Douyon, in the people of Haiti to decide to come together. When I

see folks getting together, as I have seen recently in Hong Kong, they are fighting for democracy and trying to make sure that their voices are heard. Hopefully, those voices will break through. The same thing I think has to happen. And we do need the fact that we have young people and women and others involved in the political process because I do not see how we get it done without the political process, and to figure out how do we get good people to run and governments to be transparent.

Ultimately, I do not see how the United States is going to be able to come in and demand or say that this is the person you should vote for, et cetera. It really has to come from the ground up and through and by the people of Haiti to make that determination. Because we often talk about, when you think about colonialism and others, that is when other people come in and try to tell folks, "This is what you need to do. This is how you have to do it," et cetera. And I do not want to be in a position to do those kinds of things as a U.S. Government.

That being said, I do not want us to spend our money in the wrong place that will cause damage to everyday Haitians. For example, one of the things that I was concerned about, I know when I talked to the State Department they said that the U.S. assistance to the Haitian National Police has helped strengthen their capacity and increased their ranks to 15,000. However, was that the right thing for us to do, to increase it? Because I do not know.

When I looked at the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, they found that at least 42 people have died during the recent protests and 86 have been injured. And out of the 42 deaths, at least 19 can be attributed to the security forces.

So, do I want to give money to the Haitian National Police if, in fact, they are promoting human rights violations? No. Do I want to have peace and try to make sure that people are protected, so that they can protest and do everything? Absolutely. So, I am in a position of trying to determine what should we do. What should I do, as a Member of the U.S. Congress, in the policies that we put forward and the money that we want to invest? Where should we do it? Where should we put it? Is it a right thing? Is it a wrong thing?

So, I have got a minute to go. Do I have anyone to answer those questions? Mr. Erikson?

Mr. ERIKSON. Sure. I think that one very important role for Congress could be to go to Haiti soon and really assess the situation.

Regarding the question of the Haitian National Police, I think, ultimately, civilian security in Haiti is going to depend on national police, right? We do not want the army to come back. But I think that this requires more in-depth examination by Congress, either members of this committee or others who may be interested to investigate this.

Thank you.

Mr. GARRASTAZU. And just to add to that, I think it is very important—you were saying, what should we invest in—I think we should invest in local governance, strengthening local institutions. I think that is one of the best ways to move forward, to really strengthen Haitians, and really also work with the grassroots civil society organizations and really build them up to be able to be



those actors of change, those political champions, that can really help move Haiti forward.

Mr. MEEKS. Yes, sir.

Mr. ESPERANCE. I believe we should keep on reinforcing the security, the police force in Haiti. That is the only security force that we have in Haiti. It is actually quite credible. Other groups would be what we call they are attached to the government, but the official force that we should really support is the security, the police force. It is true that there are issues when it comes to the police force, but that is the only one that provides security, and we can even say that it is one of the most, if not the most, credible institution that we have in Haiti.

What we need to keep on doing is to de-politicize the police force because there are some others that are coming from the politicians, from government officials, to some members of the police.

Please do not try to get soldiers and also members of the U.N. forces, the blue berets, because they have spent almost 14 years in Haiti and it is like sucking up money. It is better to try to reinforce the security force that we have in Haiti.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congresswoman Wilson.

Ms. WILSON. Thank you.

Thank you for your questioning, Mr. Meeks, or Congressman Meeks.

This is a very complex issue. And we live in the United States and we have corruption. We have corruption right in our White House, just like you have corruption in your President. And to find an answer to that corruption, and to remove the President of Haiti, there is a process in place and it is called impeachment in Haiti.

What has happened to the impeachment process in Haiti, as we try to debate the transitional government which the head of the judiciary would be in charge of? Explain all of that to me because I hear so many sides of they tried to impeach the President, but people did not show up. Or what happened with the impeachment of Mr. Moise? Anyone know?

Ms. DOUYON. I think I can comment on this. First of all, you mentioned that there is corruption in the U.S. as well, and some people say that there is corruption everywhere in the world. But this is not the same thing. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. We cannot afford that level of corruption we have. And the way it is affecting Haiti, it is not affecting the other countries.

And the impeachment of the President, we had that one opportunity for the parliament to impeach the President. We had that process. But what happened is that they voted against it. But those same parliament members confessed to receiving money from the government to vote. Those same parliament members are the ones involved in scandals where they are wasting millions of goods to buy coffee and water while the people do not have access to potable water.

There is a corrupt parliament where the majority are allies of the President and they are basically taking money. It is so corrupt that they are allies of the President. Yet, they are taking money from

the President and his party to vote when he needs the effort. So, basically, they came and, then, they did not do what they were supposed to do. Most people were expecting, because the charges are here, and it could have been easy; this would have been done by now, but they did not. Yet, they are proud to confess that they received money and it is normal.

And you may have seen on the news that some of them are really targeting, like fired a journalist. This is the kind of people who are in charge of the impeachment. And it has come to no surprise that it did not work.

Ms. WILSON. What role will they play in a transitional government? What role would the government that is in Haiti now play in a transitional government? How would that be structured with the President and with the parliament and the upper chamber, the senators?

Ms. DOUYON. Okay. I just want to add that, for the moment, we do not have a legal government. The one we have now is illegal. We do not have a government and the President has not been able to form one for the past 8 months.

Ms. WILSON. Because they do not show up to work?

Ms. DOUYON. Because they only show up when they have their own interests and they are paid to. Otherwise, like, for example, when they wanted to fire the Prime Minister, they all showed and it was quick and easy, and they were all proud to say how efficient they are. But when they have to show up to do their jobs, they do not.

And the President did not organize an election. Therefore, we will not have a parliament next year starting the second week of January. He will rule alone by decree. Therefore, we will only have 9 or 10 senators. It is not really clear how much people will stay because, as always, they always find a way to mess things up. So, there can be uncertainty and they will have to find a political solution, like it is amended. We should know for how long they would stay, somehow knowing exactly how many people should stay, but the fact is that we will not have a parliament for the second week of January next year, and we do not have a government now.

Ms. WILSON. But do you agree with Mr. Erikson about other nations coming in? Can Mr. Erikson repeat what he said in his testimony? I want Congressman Meeks to hear him.

Mr. ERIKSON. Sure. Just very briefly, I think we are in the middle of three crises, right? The historic one that we have discussed, the acute political crisis of the last 2 years, and the crisis of apathy and indifference in the international community. I think this hearing can help to address that latter one.

But my proposal is, while all this good work is going on in Haiti, to also re-energize the international community to see if it can help with some sort of political process to get Haiti past this impasse, which would be not just the United States, but the other members of the Core Group, which is a set of either countries or international institutions that have engaged in Haiti. It has actually been fairly dormant over the past 2 years. They include Brazil, Canada, the European Union, France, Spain, Germany, as well as the United Nations and Organization of American States.

Ms. WILSON. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you very much. I want to thank the members that came to the hearing.

And I want to thank the witnesses. You have been terrific. You have been here for almost as long as the impeachment hearing. No.

[Laughter.]

But I do thank you for your patience and your courage of some of the witnesses that are here today.

And the challenges facing Haiti are significant and they are not going away anytime soon. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to see how we can best use the resources of the U.S. Government to help lift the Haitian people.

Again, I thank you. I thank all the members who have been here. With that, this hearing is closed.

[Whereupon, at 12:29 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

**Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade**

**Albio Sires (D-NJ), Chairman**

December 10, 2019

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

**DATE:** Tuesday, December 10, 2019

**TIME:** 10:00 am

**SUBJECT:** Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis

**WITNESS:** Mr. Pierre Espérance  
Executive Director  
Haitian National Human Rights Defense Network

Ms. Emmanuela Douyon  
Nou pap domi

Mr. Daniel Erikson  
Managing Director  
Blue Star Strategies

Ms. Leonie Marie Hermantin

Mr. Antonio Garrastazu  
Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean  
International Republican Institute

**By Direction of the Chairman**

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

# COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, AND TRADE HEARING

Day Tuesday Date December 10, 2019 Room 2172

Starting Time 10:01 Ending Time 12:29

Recesses 0 ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to ) ( to )

Presiding Member(s)

*Chairman Albio Sires*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

*Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*See attached.*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not members of full committee.)

*Rep. Frederica Wilson, Rep. Barbara Lee, Rep. Maxine Waters, and Rep. Ayanna Pressley (see attached).*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*Chairman Albio Sires submitted Questions for the Record (see attached).*

*Rep. Maxine Waters submitted a Statement for the Record (see attached).*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or

TIME ADJOURNED \_\_\_\_\_

*Rink M...*  
Subcommittee Staff Associate

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
*WHEM SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING*

| <i>PRESENT</i> | <i>MEMBER</i>         |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| X              | Albio Sires, NJ       |
| X              | Gregory W. Meeks, NY  |
| X              | Joaquin Castro, TX    |
| X              | Adriano Espaillat, NY |
| X              | Dean Phillips, MN     |
| X              | Andy Levin, MI        |
|                | Vicente González, TX  |
| X              | Juan Vargas, CA       |
| X              | Frederica Wilson, FL* |
| X              | Barbara Lee, CA*      |
| X              | Maxine Waters, CA*    |
| X              | Ayanna Pressley, MA*  |

| <i>PRESENT</i> | <i>MEMBER</i>         |
|----------------|-----------------------|
|                | Francis Rooney, FL    |
| X              | Christopher Smith, NJ |
| X              | Ted Yoho, FL          |
|                | John Curtis, UT       |
| X              | Ken Buck, CO          |
|                | Michael Guest, MS     |
|                |                       |
|                |                       |
|                |                       |

\*Non-HFAC Member

# STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD

House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee

Chairman Albio Sires (D-NJ)

Opening Statement –  
“Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis”  
Tuesday, December 10, 2019

- 
- Good morning everyone and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.
  - This hearing comes at a critical time for Haiti.
  - For much of the past year, the country has been gripped by a political and economic crisis.
  - Many factors are contributing to this concerning situation.
  - Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with nearly sixty percent of Haitians living on less than two dollars per day.
  - Increasing inflation and rising costs of living have made life even more difficult for the many Haitians already struggling to get by.
  - At the same time, the Administration of President Jovenel Moise has been unable to form a government and the legislature has rejected his last two nominees for Prime Minister.
  - Scheduled elections did not take place in October, creating the real possibility that the Chamber of Deputies will dissolve in January and President Moise will be ruling by decree.
  - Yet the street demonstrations we have seen in Haiti appear to reflect even deeper discontent.
  - It seems that the Haitian people have had enough of political elites who they feel do not represent them or advocate for their interests.
  - I hear their frustration.
  - As someone who is deeply engaged in our hemisphere and who wants the best for Haiti, I also believe it is completely unacceptable that some of Haiti’s political leaders are living lavishly while the people continue to suffer.
  - I know that for the Haitian people, corruption is not an abstract concept.
  - Corruption helps explain why half of the country is undernourished.
  - Corruption contributes to Haiti’s extremely low adult literacy rate of just 60 percent.

- And corruption tells an important part of the story behind the roads that still have not been replaced following the devastating earthquake in 2010.
- In other words, the funds stolen by government officials through the Petrocaribe program did not merely disappear into thin air.
- These were dollars that should been used to improve people's lives and were instead used to line the pockets of the politically powerful.
- With today's hearing, I want to send a clear message to the Haitian people that members of the United States Congress recognize this profound injustice.
- This hearing is also about assessing U.S. policy and foreign assistance programs.
- I know that we have dedicated staff working for U-S-A-I-D and the State Department in Haiti who are trying to help improve the situation in the country.
- But I believe we need to think critically about how we can better support the Haitian people.
- For instance, I am very worried about the human rights situation in the country.
- I urge the State Department to push for full investigations into the La Saline massacre last year and allegations of excessive use of force against protesters in recent months.
- It is clear to me that a prosperous and fully democratic Haiti is in the United States' best interest.
- Moreover, the United States' relationship with the Haitian people is not a one-way street.
- We know that Haitian-Americans and Haitian-born residents living in the United States provide crucial support to their home country and lift up our economies as well.
- That is part of why I have consistently defended temporary protected status for Haitians.
- I want to thank my good friend Senator Menendez for issuing a report last month that highlighted the contributions of fifty-six thousand Haitian T-P-S holders who have been living in our country and strengthening our communities.
- I will continue to work with my colleagues to defend T-P-S for Haitians.
- I will also work to protect United States taxpayer resources.



- It is for this reason that I will continue to oppose any effort to use U.S. assistance to fund the Haitian military, which is unnecessary and diverts resources away from the National Police.
- I appreciate Congressman Levin's leadership on this and his deep engagement with Haiti.
- I hope that this hearing enables us to have an honest discussion about the extent to which our current policy is helping combat corruption, tackle poverty, and promote human rights and the rule of law in Haiti.
- And I look forward to a bipartisan conversation about what more we can be doing.
- Thank you and I now turn to the Acting Ranking Member Yoho for his opening statement.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Statement for the Record Submitted by Representative Maxine Waters  
“Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis”**

**House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade  
Monday, December 10, 2019**

I thank my colleague, Chairman Albio Sires, for organizing this hearing, entitled “Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis,” and for inviting me to participate. Haiti is indeed a country in crisis, and we are long overdue for an honest assessment of the policies of the United States towards Haiti as this crisis has developed.

In April of this year, I led a delegation to Haiti, which met with residents of the Lasalin neighborhood of Haiti’s capital and surrounding areas, who described acts of unconscionable violence that occurred in November of 2018. The Lasalin massacre resulted in the deaths of at least 71 civilians,<sup>1</sup> in addition to the rape of at least 11 women, and the looting of more than 150 homes<sup>2</sup>. Survivors expressed concern that government-connected gangs, working with police officers, carried out the attacks to punish Lasalin for participation in anti-government protests.

The protests in Lasalin – as well as many other anti-government protests throughout Haiti since the summer of 2018 – were sparked by the disappearance of millions of dollars of assistance provided to Haiti by Venezuela under the PetroCaribe program. Through PetroCaribe, Venezuela sold oil to Haiti and allowed them to defer the payments for up to 25 years and pay a low rate of interest on the debt. Haiti was supposed to sell the oil and use the money to pay for social programs. Instead, at least \$2 billion went missing. That is almost a quarter of Haiti’s total economy for 2017. The corruption in government was confirmed in a report delivered to the Haitian senate by official auditors on May 31, 2019.<sup>3</sup> This corruption occurred under the leadership of Haiti’s current president, Jovenel Moise, as well as his predecessor, Michel Martelly. Haitians began demonstrating against this government because they knew that they never saw the benefits of the PetroCaribe program.

Tragically, the response of President Moise’s government to the protests has been escalating repression. In the months since my trip to Haiti, credible investigations of the Lasalin massacre by Haiti’s National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH),<sup>4</sup> the United Nations (UN) Mission for Justice Support in Haiti together with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR),<sup>5</sup> and Haiti’s national directorate of judicial police<sup>6</sup> have all consistently pointed to politically motivated violence. Furthermore, the judicial police

<sup>1</sup> Mirkinson, Judith, and Donnelly, Seth, *The Lasalin massacre and the human rights crisis in Haiti*, National Lawyers Guild and Haiti Action Committee, July 8, 2019, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH), *The Events in La Saline from power struggle between armed gangs to state-sanctioned massacre*, December 1, 2018, pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Nugent, Ciara, *Why a Venezuelan Oil Program Is Fueling Massive Street Protests in Haiti*, Time, June 24, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> RNDDH, *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *MINUJUSTH and OHCHR release a report on the violent events of 13 and 14 November in La Saline*, June 21, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Charles, Jacqueline, *Dozens brutally killed, raped in Haiti massacre, police say: ‘even young children were not spared’*, Miami Herald, July 15, 2019.

investigation report named two senior officials from the administration of President Moïse in the list of alleged perpetrators.<sup>7</sup>

I am deeply concerned that one year after the massacre, the state officials implicated in the Lasalin killings remain at liberty, and they were only suspended from their posts in September 2019,<sup>8</sup> after repeated calls for accountability by victims and human rights organizations. Meanwhile, judicial processes in Haiti regarding Lasalin appear stalled.<sup>9</sup>

Without justice for Lasalin, impunity for violence against civilians continues, and acts of repression are increasing.<sup>10</sup> Early reports suggest that the recent killing of at least 15 people in the Bel-Air neighborhood between November 4-7, 2019, may have been carried out by the very same gang leaders implicated in the Lasalin massacre.<sup>11</sup> OHCHR has verified that Haitian security forces were responsible for at least 19 killings since September 15,<sup>12</sup> and attacks on journalists have steadily increased in recent months.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Amnesty International reported that Haitian police have repeatedly used excessive force during recent anti-government protests, including unlawfully firing live ammunition at protesters and indiscriminately launching tear gas.<sup>14</sup> These acts of violence are alarming and raise grave concerns about human rights in Haiti.

Unfortunately, the U.S. State Department continues to support the current government of Haiti without regard to either official corruption or human rights violations. When Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale traveled to Haiti last Friday and met with President Moïse and other Haitian officials, the official State Department readout of the meetings made no mention of corruption within President Moïse's government, politically motivated violence, or impunity among government officials. Instead, the readout states that Under Secretary Hale discussed "the urgent need for an inclusive dialogue among all parties."<sup>15</sup> The U.S. State Department needs to understand that the concerns of the Haitian people about corruption in their government cannot be ignored, and an inclusive dialogue cannot take place without respect for human rights.

The president of Haiti needs to take responsibility for the current political crisis in his country, and the protests will not stop until he does.

<sup>7</sup> Charles, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Danticat, Edwidge, *Demonstrators in Haiti are Fighting for an Uncertain Future*, *The New Yorker*, October 10, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> The Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), *La Saline Massacre: One Year Anniversary*, November 13, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Madeson, Frances, *Pro-democracy movement in Haiti swells despite lethal police violence*, Truthout via Salon, October 19, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> HaitiLibre, *Haiti - Security: Violence in Bel-Air neighborhood, at least 15 dead*, November 10, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Hurtado, Marta, *Press briefing note on Haiti unrest*, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, November 1, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Simon, Joel, and Deloire, Christophe, *CPJ, RSF call on Haitian authorities to investigate attacks on journalists*, Committee to Protect Journalists, November 14, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Tucker, Duncan, *Haiti: Amnesty International verifies evidence of excessive use of force against protesters*, Amnesty International, October 31, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. State Department, *READOUT: Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale's Meetings in Haiti*, December 8, 2019.

## RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED

Questions for the Record from Representative Albio Sires  
Haiti on the Brink: Assessing U.S. Policy Toward a Country in Crisis

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade  
Monday, December 10, 2019

**For Mr. Pierre Esperance:**

1. After the Haitian army was disbanded in 1995, former President Martelly began reviving it, arguing that it would be used primarily for recovery efforts following the 2010 earthquake, and for patrolling the border with the Dominican Republic and combatting smuggling. President Moïse has moved ahead, officially naming military leaders in 2017 and gradually growing the ranks over the last two years. However, given the army's history of serious human rights abuses, there remains serious concern about the potential use of the army for domestic policing functions.
  - a. Can you give examples of some of the Army leaders who have been implicated in past human rights violations?
  - b. What activities have the Army been taking part in so far?
  - c. The U.S. Congress has expressly prohibited U.S. funding from supporting the Haitian army. Do you believe that this prohibition is being fully followed?

**Answer:**

President Jovenel Moïse set up a high staff of the Armed Forces of Haiti (FADD'H), on March 13, 2018. This structure is composed of six (6) members, all of whom were members of the former FADD'H.

1. Brigade General Sadrac Saintil Chief of the General Staff.
2. Colonel Jonas Jean, Inspector General.
3. Colonel Jean-Robert Gabriel, Assistant Chief of Staff G1/G3.
4. Colonel Derby Guerrier, Assistant Chief of Staff G2/G4.
5. Colonel Joseph Jacques Thomas, Secretary of the General Staff.
6. Colonel Fontane Beaubien, member of the Commander-in-Chief's personal staff.

They are indexed for their alleged involvement in acts of human rights violations committed at the time they were part of the former demobilized armed forces.

According to the Haitian Constitution currently in force, the High Staff of the Armed Forces of Haiti (FAD»H) must be ratified by the Senate of the Republic. However, this was not the case with the structure formed by Jovenel Moïse.

Recall that the Armed Forces of Haiti were demobilized in 1995. Their remobilization should have been the subject of a law organizing their functioning, determining their role and mission. This was not done either.

At the same time, in 2018, FAD'H conducted a series of recruitments. Young people were trained. Yet these recruitments were not done in a transparent manner. Who are these young people who were trained. Were they involved in human rights violations?

The military is not officially deployed. They are also not formally involved in policing and security operations. However, in this sense, it should be recalled that the President had, on several occasions, promised to involve the FAD'H in the management of natural disasters.

However, since their remobilization, there has been no major catastrophe. Consequently, no one knows what this new army is doing any more than anyone knows what it can do.

According to what the RNDDH knows, to date, the American Administration does not give any support to the Armed Forces of Haiti (FADD'H), neither in training, nor in equipment. Nor does it give this army public support. On the contrary, the American administration has always said it wants to continue with the strengthening of police forces.

2. On November 25, Charlot Jeudy, a prominent gay rights activist, was found dead in his home in Port-au-Prince under suspicious circumstances.
  - a. Is there a larger pattern of violence or persecution against the LGBT+ community in Haiti?
  - b. In your opinion, could the U.S. be putting greater pressure on the Haitian government to ensure the rights of the LGBT+ community are respected?

**Answer:**

Charlot Jeudy died on November 25, 2019. For many, it is a suspicious death. The judicial police opened an investigation. The autopsy of the body was performed. However, to date, the results of the judicial investigation as well as the results of the autopsy are expected.

On the situation of LGBTI people in Haiti: Prior to the emergence of LGBTI advocacy organizations, the latter were more or less accepted by the company. However, as soon as they organized to demand their recognition, inclusion in society and specific rights, they were attacked by state structures such as the Haitian Parliament which, suddenly wanted to make homosexual orientation a violation of the principles of good life and morals. It is also with the emergence of LGBTI organizations that discrimination and the level of intolerance of the population have manifested itself. These organizations can count on the support of human rights organizations to advance their cause. However, a clear message from the Haitian authorities for the inclusion of all, would be important.

3. On November 14, the Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders addressed a letter to the Haitian government expressing concern over the documented uptick in violence against Haitian journalists and media workers. Over the last few months, several journalists have been injured or killed while covering the protests.
  - a. What actions has the Haitian government taken to ensure that journalists are fully protected and able to report on anti-government protests?

- b. How will the Haitian government hold those who have committed crimes against journalists accountable?

**Answer:**

In Haiti, journalists, like all citizens, have been living in widespread insecurity and impunity, set up as a system in the country for several years. Added to this, the current authorities being very intolerant of those who have ideas contrary to their own, they do nothing to advance the murder files, disappearances, physical attacks on journalists.

**For Ms. Emmanuela Douyon:**

1. President Moïse was sworn in while under investigation by the Central Unit of Financial Intelligence (UCREF) for money laundering (Brice, 2017). In May 2019, the Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes found credible evidence that the previous Martelly Administration contracted a company then led by Moïse to carry out infrastructure projects as part of a “ploy to embezzle funds”.
  - a. What specific evidence or examples has the Superior Court of Auditors presented that implicates President Moïse in the Petrocaribe scandal?
    - Haiti’ Superior Court of Auditors is the first line of defense in the fight against corruption in the country. After popular uprising and public outcry, the Court conducted a thorough investigation on the use of the Petro Caribe discount oil fund program. The court issued two reports in January 31st 2019 and May 31st 2019 which assess 75% of the distributed Petro Caribe funds. The reports found that President Moïse’s companies, Agritrans and Comphener, received money from the PetroCaribe Fund.
    - Days after Jovenel Moïse registered as the PHTK candidate in 2015 to run as the replacement for PHTK President Michel Martelly, Agritrans received at least \$1 million dollars from the PetroCaribe fund (Charles, 2019).
    - In 2015, Agritrans received a government contract, funded by the PetroCaribe program, to construct a road in northern Haiti. To date, this road has yet to be built. Betex, a company with a similar ownership structure and corporate information, also received a contract for the road project. (Le FIGARO & FPA, 2019)
    - Comphener, a company owned by Jovenel Moïse prior to becoming president, received more than \$100,000 USD for an electricity project in the northern region of Haiti. According to the Court of Auditors first report, the pay the company received for the project was far beyond market rate.
    - Prior to coming to power in 2017, Jovenel Moïse was head of Agritrans, which received more than 33 million gourdes (more than US\$700,000 at the then rate) for the road project while its business consisted of banana production. despite the unfavourable opinion of the Court of Auditors,

which at that time had found a violation of the public procurement laws. For this project, the company of the current president also received an advance of funds almost two months before the contract was signed. (Le FIGARO & FPA, 2019)

- b. What is preventing the judiciary in Haiti from bringing charges against President Moïse and other corrupt state actors?
  - The judiciary system is weak and doesn't have the necessary independence to bring charges against the President who is the one nominating judges.
  - The president himself claimed he hired 50 corrupt judges in the judiciary. This means that corruption is a problem in the judiciary system as well and it's easy to block any initiative to bring charges against the president.
  - Susan Page, head of the United Nations Mission MINUSTAH lost her job after praising advancement towards the PetroCaribe trial. If this happened to her, Haitian judges have reason to fear the same fate or worse therefore they won't be too zealous on the PetroCaribe case.
  - President Moïse removed his Prime Minister, Jean Henry Ceant in March of 2019. In public statements that he made prior to his dismissal, Ceant showed a willingness to pursue accountability in the PetroCaribe scandal. Ceant also published one of the reports for the public and press to read first hand and was in the process of releasing the list of companies that had received contracts through the fund.
  - Just last week, President Moïse removed the head of the ULCC, Haiti's anti-corruption government agency, Claudy Gassant. This came days after Gassant had been pressing all government officials to declare their assets, as is obligated by Haitian law. Moïse had illegally replaced the director of the ULCC upon taking office in February 2017 as well. The ULCC was investigating Moïse for money laundering during his presidential campaign.
  - In June 2019, auditors from Haiti's Superior Court of Audit who had just released the second report on the PetroCaribe received threats. Fearing an immediate threat to their lives, some of the auditors had to leave the country. These attacks and others like it demonstrate an intimidation for public officials attempting to work towards accountability or bring charges against corrupt state actors.
- c. What role, if any, can the U.S. Congress and our executive branch play to help bring accountability to corrupt actors in Haiti?
  - The U.S. Congress and executive branch can support accountability for corruption in Haiti by listening to the demands of Haiti's civil society groups and anti-corruption movements.
  - The U.S. Government can use international law against money laundering and terrorism financing to investigate the flow of money coming out of Haiti to the U.S. As many of the actors implicated in embezzling

PetroCaribe funds reside in Miami and other U.S. cities, this is an important step to help Haiti fight corruption and ensure money flowing into the U.S. isn't being used in nefarious ways.

- The U.S. Government's public and unwavering support of Jovenel Moïse, who is accused of corruption by his own government, is an impediment to the rule of law and the fight against corruption in Haiti. As Haiti's long-term partner in the international community, the U.S.' continued supportive stance sends a dangerous message of future impunity for flagrant corruption by government officials.
- d. Is there a balance the United States can strike in taking on corruption in Haiti while still maintaining some limited engagement with the Moïse government?
  - As a firm believer in democracy and the rule of law, I see that the U.S. and other members of the international community can support a peaceful transition of power that has the potential to help build stronger institutions in Haiti where a president can be held accountable by Haiti's judicial system for charges of corruption.
- e. In your view, did the U.S. government respond adequately to the Petro-Caribe allegations and particularly the official audit report that came out in May 2019?
  - In my view, the U.S. government's response, which called for dialogue with all political actors in the country, was inadequate as a response to well-documented allegations of the mishandling and misuse of billions of dollars of the PetroCaribe fund that future generations of Haitians will be responsible for paying off.
- 2. In 2014, Haiti passed a comprehensive anti-corruption law broadly defining corruption and decreeing a zero-tolerance policy toward the practice. However, corruption remains a serious problem in Haiti, and the country ranked 161st of 180 countries in Transparency International's most recent Corruption Perceptions Index, reflecting Haitian citizens' perceptions that corruption is pervasive.
  - a. What positive strides, if any, have been made in the fight against corruption, and has U.S. assistance played a positive role?
    - Just days ago, Haiti's rank in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index fell even further, dropping to 168th. This reflects what Haitians see in the country, which is deteriorating governance, rule of law, and accountability. Though I don't see that positive strides against corruption have been made or that U.S. engagement over the past year has been effective, what I do see is a new generation of Haitians joining together across divides to demand an end to corruption in Haiti with a shared commitment to ensure that meaningful change happens.
  - b. Are there specific reforms needed to move forward in the anti-corruption fight?
    - The new generation of Haitians that I am proud to be a part of are asking for systematic change because we know that Haiti's systems perpetuate endemic corruption. In the streets of Port-au-Prince, you will hear people asking for slogans like *taboula raza* or starting over with a clean slate. For



our generation, we want to provide an example to the ones that will follow that corruption and impunity has no place in Haitian society. For us, a full and fair PetroCaribe trial is non-negotiable. This is a critical step to demonstrate that even the country's most affluent and most powerful will be held accountable by the law.

- c. What role, if any, could international bodies play? Could a UN-backed or OAS-backed international anti-corruption institution be useful in supporting the fight against corruption in Haiti?
  - It is essential for the international community to commit to meaningfully listening to, assessing, and responding to the demands of Haitians instead of rushing to impose short-term solutions that favor short-term stability over long-term positive change. International support can be helpful, but only if it responds to the demands of the Haitian people and does not seek to impose solutions from abroad.

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**For Mr. Daniel Erikson:**

1. According to the State Department, U.S. policy toward Haiti has been focused on strengthening institutions and infrastructure for sustainable development, democratic foundations, and poverty alleviation.
  - a. What is the perception among Haitians of the U.S. Embassy and U.S. assistance to Haiti?
  - b. Is there a balance the United States can strike in battling corruption in Haiti while still engaging with the Moise government?
  - c. Did the U.S. government respond adequately to the Petro-Caribe allegations and particularly the official audit report that came out in May 2019?
  - d. Has the U.S. Embassy spoken out strongly enough on human rights abuses in Haiti?
  - e. Do you believe the U.S. Embassy should continue to engage with the Moise Administration, assuming the upcoming deadline passes and he begins to rule by decree? If so, what conditions or limitations, if any, should be placed on such engagement?

**Answer:**

Haitians have diverse perspectives on the U.S. embassy and U.S. assistance in Haiti. Clearly, there is a widespread view among many Haitians that the international community – including not just the United States but also the United Nations and various donor nations and non-governmental organizations – have failed to deliver on lofty promises of reconstruction and development after the Haitian earthquake. There is concern that promised assistance from the United States often ends up in the hands of U.S. or foreign contractors and that only a small percentage reaches the Haitian people. However, during my recent visit I found that the current U.S. ambassador and U.S. embassy team is held in high regard by many Haitian sectors.

In 2019, Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Haiti 168th out of 180 countries in terms of prevalence of corruption. While Haiti has long languished near the bottom of this and other international corruption indicators, Haiti's social movements have become increasingly focused on the need to combat corruption much more forcefully, especially in the wake of the Petro-Caribe-related scandals. Despite this challenging political context, it is still possible for the United States to fight corruption in Haiti while maintaining engagement with the current Haitian government. Haiti already has a number of anti-corruption laws on the books, but the problem is uneven or lack of enforcement. The United States should engage with Haiti to ensure that its own anti-corruption laws are enforced, including against Haitian government officials who are credibly accused of corruption. With regard to the official audit of corruption allegations related to Petro-Caribe, the U.S. could have taken a stronger stance in offering assistance to the Haitian government to implement appropriate accountability mechanisms to prevent such misuse in the future.

The U.S. embassy has taken on a stronger voice in term of supporting human rights in Haiti over the past year, but it is clear that continuous attention from congressional and civil society groups in Haiti will be necessary to help maintain this focus.

Moise will remain the president after the expiration of parliament, but there is little doubt that his political legitimacy will be called further into question without a political accord. Certainly, without a parliament to approve loans, Haiti will lose access to possible financial support from the multilateral development banks. Nevertheless, it will be important for the United States to continue to support institutions like the Haitian National Police, one of the few institutions that has improved in the last ten years. The most important task will be for the United States to continue to press the Moise government to hold new elections (parliamentary, and eventually presidential), enact reforms to increase accountability and transparency, and respect human rights and the rule of law.

2. Haiti is the poorest country in Latin America and one of the poorest in the world. 59% of the population lives below the poverty line and 24% lives in extreme poverty.
  - a. To what extent has U.S. assistance been effective at reducing poverty?
  - b. How could increased foreign investment affect poverty levels in Haiti?

- c. It the Moise administration's current dispute with utility companies in Haiti impacting private investment?
- d. What other strategies could the U.S. engage in to help reduce poverty in Haiti?

**Answer:**

U.S. assistance to Haiti has been effective in helping to meet immediate humanitarian needs and providing medical aid to the needy. However, U.S. assistance has not been effective in reducing poverty in Haiti over the long term. This is hardly the fault of the United States alone, or of other international donors, as much of this failure resides with the inability of Haitian leaders to fashion an economic development plan that takes advantage of the country's obvious natural advantages in terms of geographic location, a population eager to escape chronic unemployment and learn new skills, and proximity to the U.S. market. In order for Haiti to break the cycle of poverty, the country will need to achieve a "revolution of growth" with GDP growth of 6-8 percent a year over the next decade. While this target would be ambitious, the experience of the neighboring Dominican Republic, which achieved annual GDP growth rates over 6 percent for most the last decade, shows that it is not impossible. However, Haiti cannot achieve this level of economic growth without a substantial increase in foreign direct investment, which itself will require a stable and clear legal environment for investments, improved security and rule of law, and a government commitment to maintaining infrastructure. In this context, the Moise administration's dispute with utility companies in Haiti creates further legal uncertainty that undermines the country's investment prospects.

- 3. According to the State Department, criminal gangs in Haiti use the country as a transit point for cocaine from South America and marijuana from Jamaica en route to the U.S. and other markets.
  - a. How would you evaluate the Haitian government's efforts to combat drug trafficking?
  - b. What role has U.S. assistance played in combating drug trafficking through Haiti?

**Answer:**

Haiti has very few defenses against drug trafficking. Its coast guard is weak and underfunded and its border with the Dominican Republic is fairly porous. The Haitian government has not treated the fight against drug trafficking as priority. However, the professionalization of the Haitian National Police has contributed to some victories in the fight against the drug trade, such as the capture of notorious drug trafficker Jean Ednor Innocent, who was captured by the Haitian National Police and extradited to U.S. authorities in Miami last year. Therefore, U.S. assistance to the police will remain a critical element of combatting the drug trade.