



## Political Crisis in Haiti

### Haiti- Genesis of the Current Crisis

**HAITI** - In February 2019, violent protests erupted in Haiti. The mobilization, called "Operation Country Lock" (Blocked Country), has paralyzed all economic and commercial activities. Across the country, citizens were protesting - empty plates in hand - to deal with corruption and high cost of living, and for good reason: at the end of February 2019, the inflation rate passed the 17% mark, a record in 10 years. Added to the surge in prices is the devaluation of the national currency, the gourdes, against the US dollar. This economic situation has a serious impact on the daily lives of Haitians. The entire society is affected.

The protests brought together several thousand Haitians who are calling for the resignation of President Jovenel Moise, accused by the Higher Court of Auditors of being in the gears of a strategy of embezzlement. This prompted violent scuffles between youth groups and law enforcement. The judges of the Court of Auditors published a report of more than 600 pages on the use of the Petro Caribe fund, a development programme sponsored by Venezuela, which is proving to be a bad example of corruption. In the capital and across the country, dozens of armed gangs were panicking. Bursts of live ammunition were heard at all times of the day and night in different neighborhoods.

The call for a reorganization of national institutions is shared by the Catholic sector.

The country is experiencing violent protests against the government; there are countless victims of the outbursts. These riots led to the fall of the government in mid-March and since then the political process for setting up a new cabinet has been blocked by the Parliament. With no ministers in office, no budget voted for the current fiscal year. Haiti is also threatened by a constitutional crisis because legislative elections cannot take place. This fragility exacerbates the economic crisis which the country is actually facing. With inflation exceeding 17%, coupled with a sharp devaluation of the

national currency, the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable families are growing. The country is sinking further into misery and anger that has been swelled for months.

President Jovenel Moïse's commitments have not been fulfilled. "Badly elected" in February 2017 by 12% of the electorate (21% had voted), he had promised 24-hour electricity, food, the development of the agriculture, etc. But the people are hungry.

The city of Port-au-Prince, initially designed for 300,000 inhabitants, has more than 3 million. The periphery is made up of "*Neighborhoods without*": without water, without electricity, without services, without a state, such as the numerous slums of cardboard and rusty metal sheets in the lower part of the city, or the "concrete cities" of cinder blocks that encircle the beautiful districts of Pétion-Ville on the hills of Port-au-Prince, since the earthquake of January 12, 2010 that destroyed the historic lower town, which has since remained largely in ruins and at the hands of armed gangs.

"*Neighborhoods without*" are everywhere in the outskirts of cities where more than three-quarters of the population live in miserable conditions, while wealthy families barricade themselves behind big walls, when they do not go to Florida.

For several months, the country is abandoned, the streets of the capital are littered with waste and rubble.

The future is still uncertain, the schools still remain closed, and as a result, the country remains blocked (locked). Even if there is now an apparent calm, the country is seriously ill. Violence will resume regularly until a political solution is found. Haiti is going through crisis to crisis and no one knows until when.

Protests take place everywhere, in the capital, especially on the airport side, and towards the Champs de Mars and Pétion-Ville and Tabarre, and in all regions of the country. The few times the president has officially spoken, he has added fuel to the fire, and the effects of the crisis are felt everywhere - people have no food, and the fact that schools are closed, all the activities related to schools such as transport, vendors, markets, banks, etc. are also impacted. On "open" days, sometimes on weekends, supermarkets close their front doors because of the insecurity. The same goes for banks.

The demonstrators are mostly unemployed young people from the slums of Saline and Cité Soleil. There are tens of thousands present who filled the streets towards the institutions of the state (Champs de Mars) or the residences of ministers (Petionville)... we know that the population of Cité Soleil exceeds 300,000 inhabitants. It was the population originally planned for the capital which has nearly 4 million. Too many frustrations lead to more violence everywhere.

*The Conference of Bishops of Haiti (CEH) has said in its letter:*

*"Is there more excruciating violence than living in insecurity all the time? Is there anything worse than misery that takes away all hope? No one should accept poverty, and violence in a defeatist way. The most senior officials of the state must assume their responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the country and the institutions; they are morally responsible for the safety and well-being of the population and first of all, the President of the Republic", the Catholic bishops wrote in their statement. "If the country is on fire, it is because of their irresponsibility. How can they not know what everyone knows? In a burst of awareness that they measure the extent of their accumulated failures and draw the consequences. Now is the time for them to act to change the life in Haiti. Tomorrow will be too late. Despite our repeated appeals over the past two years, Haiti's current leaders, elected officials and politicians remain deaf, busy managing their power, privileges and petty interests. Meanwhile, some sectors continue to get rich on the backs of the poor who cannot eat or pay for their children's schooling." The bishops call on the people to unite "to divert insecurity, corruption, impunity, violence and all the seeds of death. God created us for life. For this,*

*we have the right to exist and to live with dignity. It's like we're in a fratricidal state of war. We have come to this point because of the behaviour of elected officials and leaders. Now is not the time to claim that we are all guilty. That is not the truth. Nor to say that we condemn violence wherever it comes from; It has an origin. "*

November 10: There is no real proposal for the crisis resolution. Members of various opposition groups met over the past weekend to propose one, but already citizens are expressing doubts about those who are, for the most part, actors and beneficiaries of the corrupted system. The much-desired change will not be easy with them.

The crisis is going on and people are at a loss. Even those who usually have a small activity that allows them to live day to day, have nothing left because of the many days of "country lock" (closed). President Jovenel now thinks only of ensuring his own safety.

Closed schools deprive thousands of teachers and thousands of "small merchants" who sell the daily lunches to students. Public transport is very slow, given that most of the users are students and teachers.

The country has not had an earthquake or a cyclone this year but now, it is again in turmoil. No wonder some imagine that a curse hangs over this poor little country!

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