



Security Council

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Letter dated 15 April 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the third quarterly report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, pursuant to paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution [2692 \(2023\)](#). The report includes the requested updated information on the sources and routes of arms trafficking and illicit financial flows, and on relevant United Nations activities and recommendations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present document brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**



Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime pursuant to paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 2692 (2023)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 2692 (2023), in which the Council tasked the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with reporting to the Council every three months, concurrent with the reporting cycle of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), through the Secretary-General, on sources and routes of illicit arms and financial flows, relevant United Nations activities and recommendations.

2. The first report (S/2023/780) provided an overview of the context in which firearms and ammunition trafficking occurs in and related to Haiti, including key sources, modi operandi and routes from the north and east of the country. It featured insights from the UNODC briefing note entitled “Haiti’s criminal markets: mapping trends in firearms and drug trafficking”, issued in March 2023,¹ which documented a surge in the trafficking of high-powered and sophisticated weapons from 2021 to 2023, mostly linked to criminal gangs. Firearms and ammunition were believed to be principally shipped from the United States of America directly or to arrive via intermediaries in the Dominican Republic.

3. In the second report (S/2024/79), UNODC described the regional dynamics of firearms and ammunition trafficking, in particular with regard to source and transit countries, including the United States, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. UNODC also highlighted domestic arms trafficking dynamics, including the ways in which gangs and criminal networks procure and distribute firearms and ammunition between groups, especially in the capital, Port-au-Prince. According to the findings presented in the report, a comparatively small number of gangs were particularly expert in acquiring, stockpiling and redistributing firearms and ammunition. UNODC identified several activities undertaken by anti-corruption agencies in Haiti, including as they related to disrupting the purchase of weapons.

4. The present report was prepared during a period of rapid deterioration, during which gangs dramatically escalated violence in the capital. It contains details on: (a) the deteriorating security situation in Haiti between January and March 2024; (b) the regional and domestic dynamics related to firearms and ammunition proliferation, including the vulnerability of southern Haiti to trafficking; (c) the relationship between destabilization in Haiti and expanded migration flows in the Caribbean; and (d) the general dynamics of financial crimes and past responses in Haiti. UNODC underlines the critical urgency of strengthening border controls in Haiti and across the region to prevent access to firearms and ammunition. It also highlights several key events that have occurred since 29 February, to illustrate the ways in which gang networks are able to assert and consolidate their control over strategic areas in Port-au-Prince and coastal regions.

Background

5. Gang violence has expanded dramatically in frequency and intensity in Haiti since late February 2024. A series of coordinated attacks on government facilities and infrastructure coincided with the visit of the then Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, to Nairobi to sign an agreement to deploy over 1,000 Kenyan police officers in Haiti. In the first two weeks of March 2024, gangs intensified efforts to control the capital and

¹ Available at www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/toc/Haiti_assessment_UNODC.pdf.

neighbouring cities and towns.² A novel development was the apparent coordinated activities conducted by gangs against strategic targets. The leader of G9 Family and Allies announced the formation of the so-called “*Viv Ansanm*” (“Live Together”) coalition, an idea that he had first floated in September 2023. While the extent of collaboration between G9 and a rival gang coalition, G-Pèp, is not clear, it appears that they have collectively mobilized against strategic targets. Indeed, both gang federations, and possibly other criminal gangs, have targeted a range of institutions, including the international airport, prison facilities, the general hospital, police stations, customs offices, the agronomy and veterinary medicine academies, commercial markets and private residences.

6. A major development involved the freeing of thousands of prison inmates, some of whom rejoined gangs across Haiti. Several members of G9 and G-Pèp targeted two Haitian prisons on the evening of 2 March 2024: the national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince and the Croix-des-Bouquets facility. Several people were killed in the exchange of gunfire during the attack, and 4,645 inmates are reported to have escaped.³ Among the escapees are known gang leaders and criminal actors, including some suspected of involvement in the assassination of the President, Jovenel Moïse. Following the prison break, gangs targeted the international airport, killing several police officers and civilians in the process. On 6 March, the Government of Haiti extended the state of emergency and curfew by a month, until 10 April 2024.

7. Escalating gang-led violence is taking a major toll on Haitian safety and security. In March 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that at least 1,554 Haitians had been killed and 826 had been injured in the first three months of 2024.⁴ According to the United Nations, over 15,000 Haitians were forced to flee in the first two months of 2024, adding to the more than 362,000, half of them children, already internally displaced.⁵ Extensive extortion, kidnapping and sexual violence has been documented by the media and in human rights reporting.⁶ Gruesome images of individuals being killed and raped at gunpoint have been circulated widely on social media. Due to the deepening insecurity and skyrocketing food prices, half of the population now depends on relief assistance and more than a million children are out of school.⁷

8. Regional and international concerns regarding the deteriorating situation in Haiti are mounting. The Secretary-General reiterated his “deep concern” on 5 March, and the Security Council held a private session on Haiti on 6 March to discuss the deteriorating security situation.⁸ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has likewise issued a series of calls for the urgent deployment of the

² As reported by BINUH and the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre on 11 March 2024.

³ As confirmed by BINUH on 12 March 2024.

⁴ See [A/HRC/55/76](#) (forthcoming).

⁵ See United Nations News, “Haiti crisis: UN mission announces airbridge to facilitate aid relief”, 14 March 2024, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147521>.

⁶ See United Nations News, “Haiti: human rights deteriorating as gang violence spreads”, 9 February 2024, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/02/1146407>; and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Haiti: Türk warns of deepening human rights crisis following most violent month in two years”, 9 February 2024, available at www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/haiti-turk-warns-deepening-human-rights-crisis-following-most-violent-month.

⁷ See Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Haiti update: impact of violence in Port-au-Prince”, 19 February 2024, available at www.unocha.org/publications/report/haiti/haiti-update-impact-violence-port-au-prince-published-february-19-2024.

⁸ See United Nations News, “Haiti crisis: UN chief calls for ‘urgent action’ to end rampant insecurity”, 5 March 2024, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147262>.

Multinational Security Support Mission.⁹ Amid escalating declarations of alarm,¹⁰ CARICOM called for an emergency meeting to review the political and humanitarian crisis on 11 March.¹¹ Member States are recommending measures to expedite the political transition through the creation of a broad-based independent Transitional Presidential Council. Meanwhile, Canada, the United States and several European countries evacuated non-essential diplomatic mission personnel by air.

II. Dynamics of criminal activities

Domestic dynamics of illicit arms and gang activities

9. The robust association between gang violence, firearms trafficking, drug trafficking, illicit financial flows and political and economic corruption are publicly recognized.¹² In November 2023, OHCHR emphasized that the “focus [of the international community] must continue to be on the implementation of the arms embargo and sanctions targeting those responsible for this untenable situation”.¹³ Concerns about the continued infringement of the arms embargo by sanctioned individuals were likewise raised during an emergency session of the Security Council on 6 March 2024.¹⁴ Many of the multilateral and bilateral sanctions issued against Haitian nationals since 2022 have also focused on arms and drugs trafficking and corruption, all of which are helping to sustain the power and influence of criminal gangs.¹⁵

10. Gangs operating across and controlling large swathes of Haitian territory have long maintained connections with political and business actors. As indicated in multiple multilateral and bilateral sanctions and criminal cases, former and current lawmakers, public officials and prominent economic actors have leveraged gangs as protectors and enforcers. Gangs and their backers have been involved in recruiting Haitian nationals residing outside the country to acquire and ship weapons from the United States to Haiti.¹⁶ In 2023, the United States House of Representatives passed the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act to enhance sanctions and prosecutions of United States residents who aid Haitian gangs.¹⁷

11. One powerful gang, the 400 Mawozo, has played a significant role in perpetrating violence in Haiti. The 400 Mawozo gang has traditionally operated primarily in the Croix-des-Bouquets area of eastern Port-au-Prince. Since January 2020, 400 Mawozo has pursued kidnapping and hostage-for-ransom, including of United States and Canadian citizens. In October 2021, for example, the 400 Mawozo gang claimed responsibility for taking 16 United States citizens and 1 Canadian

⁹ See United Nations News, “Haiti: UN officials say ‘we are running out of time’ amid escalating crises”, 6 March 2024, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147317>.

¹⁰ See Caribbean Community (CARICOM), statement on Haiti by Chair of CARICOM, 9 March 2024, available at <https://caricom.org/statement-on-haiti-by-chair-of-caricom-h-e-dr-mohamed-irfaan-ali-on-friday-8-march-2024/>.

¹¹ See CARICOM, “Outcome declaration of CARICOM, international partners and Haitian stakeholders”, 11 March 2024, available at <https://caricom.org/outcome-declaration-of-caricom-international-partners-and-haitian-stakeholders/>.

¹² See resolution 2700 (2023).

¹³ See United Nations News, “Haiti: gangs move into rural areas as Türk says new force ‘must be deployed’”, 28 November 2023, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/11/1144067>.

¹⁴ See United Nations, Security Council press statement on Haiti, 11 March 2024, available at <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15620.doc.htm>.

¹⁵ The UNODC team has conducted a review of the sanctions imposed by the United States, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, the European Union and the Security Council (see paras. 18–21 below for a short description).

¹⁶ See UNODC, “Haiti’s criminal markets: mapping trends in firearms and drug trafficking”.

¹⁷ Current status available at www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1684.

hostage. Cash ransom proceeds have been comingled with gang funds and transferred via MoneyGram and Western Union to the United States to purchase firearms.¹⁸

12. A criminal trial involving the former leader of the 400 Mawozo offers insight into how firearms and ammunition are procured in the United States and transported to and distributed in Haiti. The gang's former leader pleaded guilty in the United States to a gunrunning conspiracy on 31 January 2024.¹⁹ He was accused of smuggling firearms into Haiti in violation of United States export laws and laundering ransom proceeds paid for United States hostages in 2021. The conspiracy charges included the purchase in the United States of at least 24 firearms, including AK-47s, AR-15s, an M4 carbine rifle, an M1A rifle, a 0.50 calibre rifle, a shotgun and 2 pistols. Two co-defendants in the case also pleaded guilty to the same 48-count indictment, including one who had acted as a straw purchaser.²⁰ According to evidence presented during the trial, the defendants worked with gang members in Haiti between March and November 2021 to acquire and supply firearms to 400 Mawozo.

13. The process by which 400 Mawozo organized the procurement of firearms during this period is revealing.²¹ The former head of the gang directed operations from a Haitian prison cell using unmonitored cell phones, instructing gang members to transfer funds in the United States for the purpose of obtaining weapons. The leader provided co-defendants, all of them Florida residents, with specifications for the types of armaments to purchase. The co-defendants allegedly procured firearms from Florida gun shops, falsely stating that they were the "actual buyers", when in fact they operated as straw purchasers for the head of the 400 Mawozo gang.²² In May 2021, firearms were smuggled to Haiti in containers disguised as food and household items and wrapped in garbage bags. In October 2021, additional firearms and ammunition were shipped before being seized by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. During the trial, one of the co-defendants in the case confirmed that certain Haitian senators had provided support and weapons during electoral periods.

14. In addition to serious concerns about instability and criminal violence in Port-au-Prince, there is growing alarm about drugs and firearms trafficking in the south of the country. In its previous reports to the Security Council, UNODC underlined the ways in which firearms and ammunition enter Haiti via ports, air strips and vehicles in the west, north and east of the country.²³ However, owing to its strategic location,

¹⁸ See United States Department of Justice, "'King' of violent Haitian gang pleads guilty to gun smuggling and money laundering after government's case", 1 February 2024, available at www.justice.gov/opa/pr/king-violent-haitian-gang-pleads-guilty-gun-smuggling-and-money-laundering-after-governments.

¹⁹ See United States, Attorney's Office, District of Columbia, "'King' of violent Haitian gang pleads guilty to gun smuggling and money laundering after government's case", 31 January 2024, available at www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/king-violent-haitian-gang-pleads-guilty-gun-smuggling-and-money-laundering-after.

²⁰ According to an indictment, between 18 September and 17 October 2021, the individual purchased 10 semi-automatic high-power rifles at gun shops in the area of Orlando, Florida at Germine's direction. After attempts were made by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to arrest the individual, he stopped using his cell phone. He was eventually captured in the Midwest. See United States Embassy in Haiti, "Florida resident sentenced for smuggling firearms from United States to violent Haitian gang that kidnapped 19 Americans", 28 February 2024, available at <https://ht.usembassy.gov/florida-resident-sentenced-for-smuggling-firearms-from-united-states-to-violent-haitian-gang-that-kidnapped-19-americans/>.

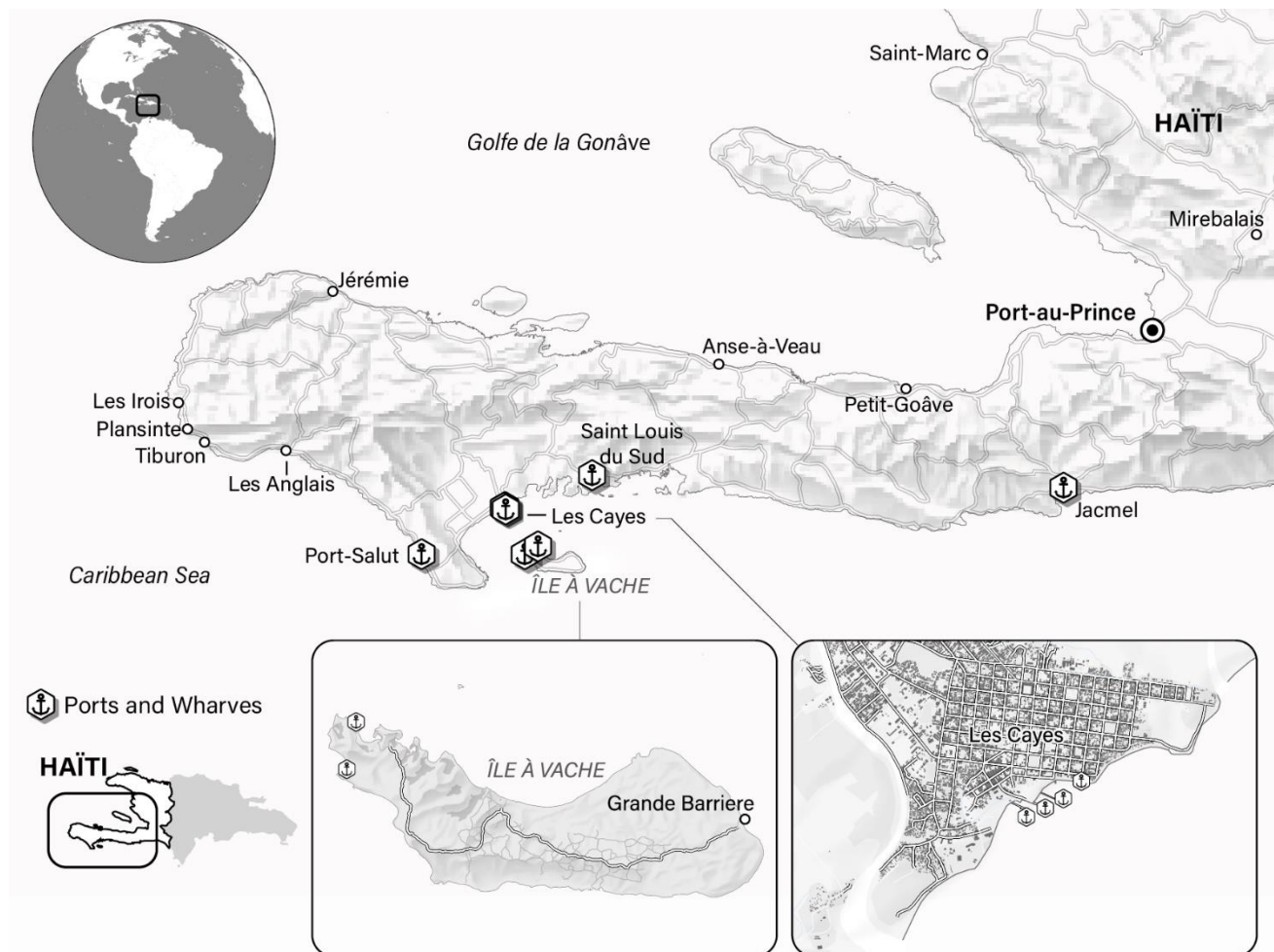
²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ See S/2023/780 and S/2024/79.

poorly monitored airspace,²⁴ and unpatrolled coastline, the southern departments also serve as critical entry points for a range of illicit products, including cocaine from South America, cannabis from Jamaica and firearms from multiple jurisdictions. Firearms, ammunitions and narcotics have reportedly entered Haiti by land, air and especially by sea via Les Cayes, Tiburon, Les Irois, Jérémie, Côtes-de-Fer and Jacmel (see figure I).²⁵ Clandestine shipments are facilitated by wharves in Les Cayes, Jacmel and Saint-Louis du Sud, airstrips in Dame-Marie and Font des Blancs, and refurbished roads connecting cities east of Les Cayes through Les Anglais, Tiburon, Plansinte, Caresse and Les Irois.²⁶

Figure I
Selected ports or wharves in southern Haiti



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: Based on site visits and key informant interviews conducted by UNODC.

²⁴ According to key informant K3, there are two kinds of radar available that could assist the National Civil Aviation Office in reducing the flow of illegal flights into Haiti. A primary radar can identify any aircraft entering the airspace. A secondary radar can make contact through a responder if the pilot elects to do so. Haiti has only the second type of radar. Access to a primary radar could increase airspace domain awareness, including of aircraft that turn off their tracking devices.

²⁵ Interview with key informant K1 on 14 February 2024. See also [S/2023/674](#).

²⁶ The building and management of these facilities have been actively supported by several Haitian politicians who are subject to sanctions.

15. Several areas of southern Haiti warrant scrutiny owing to their historic vulnerability to criminal gangs and criminal illicit activities. For decades, the United States Department of State has noted that Haiti is a conduit for drug traffickers transporting cocaine from South America to the United States and, to a lesser extent, Europe.²⁷ Indeed, locations such as Île à Vache and Les Cayes have long been considered entry points for the trafficking of firearms, drugs and other illicit goods. Likewise, the town of Côtes-de-Fer in South-East Department has also been singled out by informants as a hotspot for contraband.²⁸ One popular method of moving illegal products involves “banana boats”, go-fast vessels that arrive at night, beach themselves on coastal banana plantations, and are subsequently destroyed after unloading their cargo.²⁹ The crew and consignments are believed to periodically be transported directly to the Haitian-Dominican Republic border.

16. While the absolute quantity of drugs arriving in Haiti appears to have declined over the past year, both weapons and narcotics continue to be transported to southern Haiti by air and sea from Colombia, Jamaica and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).³⁰ Several Haitian-led police operations recently resulted in the arrest of drug traffickers operating in southern Haiti. It is frequently the case that drug shipments are paired with firearms and ammunition.³¹ Moreover, Tiburon, a coastal city, continues to be heavily impacted.³² There are multiple reports from residents of confrontations between rival gang members who are seeking to control trans-shipment routes in and out of the area. For example, in September 2023, information was received from employees of a construction firm near Les Irois regarding the presence of armed individuals and small boats.³³ Over the past four years foreigners have been implicated in trafficking on Haitian territory, including the southern part.

17. After firearms and ammunition arrive on the southern coast of Haiti, they are frequently transported directly to Port-au-Prince, where they are redistributed to armed groups. The principal route from the south to the capital is Route Nationale 3, which is an “indispensable axis for drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion”.³⁴ The gangs that reportedly control the Route Nationale 3 are affiliated with G-Pèp. They include the 5 Segond gang, based in Village de Dieu (Martissant) and Mariani (Carrefour), and the Grand Ravine gang, based in Martissant. Both gangs are regarded as major players in the organization and distribution of arms, munitions and drugs. Several gang members, affiliated mainly with G-Pèp, were recently arrested in towns in southern Haiti, including Jacmel, Les Cayes, Port Salut, Jérémie and Miragoâne.

18. Several prominent current and former politicians and business operators are suspected of being involved in criminal markets in southern Haiti. Specifically, senior political actors representing departments in the south have been sanctioned by Canada, the Dominican Republic and the United States for their involvement in aiding gangs, drug trafficking and corruption. In addition to supporting enabling infrastructure, including airstrips, multiple members of the political and economic elite have reportedly invested in private ports, speedboats, private planes and a wide range of

²⁷ United States Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2006, vol. I, pp. 191–204. Available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/62386.pdf>.

²⁸ Interview with key informant K1 on 14 February 2024.

²⁹ Interview with key informant K3 on 27 January 2024.

³⁰ Ibid. See also S/2023/674, S/2023/780 and S/2024/79.

³¹ Interview with key informant K2 on 27 January 2024. See also Jean Daniel Sénat, “Un Jamaïcain arrêté à Tabarre, drogue et armes à feu saisies”, *Le Nouvelliste*, 17 April 2020, available at www.lenouvelliste.com/article/215012/un-jamaicain-arrete-a-tabarre-droque-et-armes-a-feu-saisies.

³² See S/2024/79.

³³ This information was confirmed by interview with key informant K5 on 19 September 2023.

³⁴ See S/2023/674. See also S/2023/780 and S/2024/79.

vehicles.³⁵ The full extent of their involvement, as well as that of other individuals, in facilitating illicit activities is not yet fully understood and merits further investigation.

19. The Security Council established a sanctions regime targeting Haiti in October 2022 by its resolution [2653 \(2022\)](#). The sanctions were renewed for another year under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in October 2023.³⁶ The regime is made up of targeted sanctions that include travel bans, asset freezes and an arms embargo prohibiting the supply, sale or transfer of arms and ammunition.

20. Since 2022, five individuals, all connected to criminal gangs, have been targeted by the Security Council sanctions. Specifically, the Security Council sanctioned gang leaders, starting with the head of the G9 gang alliance in 2022.³⁷ In December 2023, sanctions were extended to four more individuals, namely the head of the Grand Ravine gang,³⁸ the titular leader of the Kraze Barye gang, the main leader of the 5 Segond gang, who has been playing an increasingly influential role in the G-Pèp alliance, and the leader of the 400 Mawozo gang, currently held in a prison in the United States. These individuals are all under criminal investigation in the United States, and the Security Council measures were rapidly followed up with additional sanctions from the United States Department of the Treasury. Each of the sanctioned individuals is allegedly implicated in a range of violations, including arms trafficking.

21. Since 2022, unilateral sanctions targeting both gang members and members of the political and economic elite have been initiated. The European Union, for example, has imposed travel and asset sanctions against the same five individuals named by the Security Council in 2022 and 2023.³⁹ Collectively, Canada,⁴⁰ the United States,⁴¹ the European Union, the Dominican Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have issued dozens of sanctions against a range of political and economic actors in the country, including former presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, senators, police officers, customs officials, religious officials and business operators.⁴²

A deepening prison crisis

22. Prisons in Haiti are traditionally highly overpopulated due in part to a backlog in criminal justice. According to the Organisation des citoyens pour une nouvelle

³⁵ Examples include former Haitian senators, parliamentarians, cabinet ministers, prime ministers and presidents.

³⁶ See United Nations, “Security Council renews sanctions regime, targeted arms embargo on Haiti for one year, unanimously adopting resolution [2700 \(2023\)](#)”, 19 October 2023, available at <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15455.doc.htm>.

³⁷ See United Nations, “Security Council 2653 Sanctions Committee amends one entry on its Sanctions List”, 20 October 2023, available at <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15459.doc.htm>.

³⁸ See Security Council, “Renel Destina”, 8 December 2023, available at www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/renel-destina.

³⁹ Under the jurisdiction of the European Magnitsky Act. The European Union issued sanctions in January 2024. See Council Regulation (EU) 2023/1569 of 28 July 2023, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/1569/oj>. See also Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/1574 of 28 July 2023, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2023/1574/oj>.

⁴⁰ For a list of all Haitians sanctioned by Canada, see Canada, “Canadian sanctions related to Haiti”, available at www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/sanctions/haiti.aspx?lang=eng.

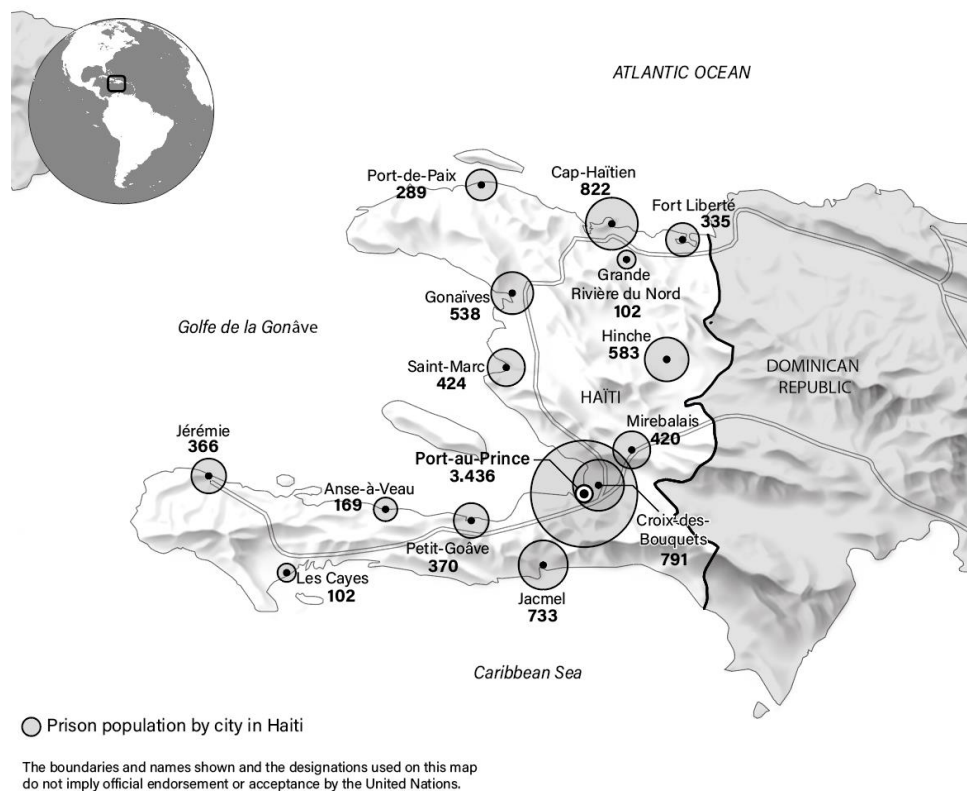
⁴¹ For a review of individuals sanctioned by the United States, consult the sanctions list search website of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, available at <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>.

⁴² See Canada, Consolidated Canadian Autonomous Sanctions List, available at www.international.gc.ca/campaign-campagne/haiti-sanction/index.aspx?lang=eng; United States, Office of Foreign Assets Control, sanctions list search, <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/>; United Kingdom “The UK sanctions list”, www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list; and Haiti Libre, “Haiti – flash: list of all Haitians sanctioned since 1 year”, 27 October 2023, available at www.haitilibre.com/en/news-40821-haiti-flash-list-of-all-haitians-sanctioned-since-1-year.html.

Haiti, a non-governmental organization, all Haitian prisons and jail facilities are operating well above their intended capacity. For example, the national penitentiary had at least 3,436 inmates when it was attacked in March 2024 but was designed to hold just 800 people. Given the low rate of processing criminal cases, many of the inmates that fled during the incident in March 2024 were pretrial detainees. Indeed, the facility registered a pretrial detention rate of over 90 per cent, as compared with 69 per cent in the case of the Croix-des-Bouquets prison (see figure II and annex II).

23. The national prison system was already severely degraded before the escalation of violence in 2024.⁴³ The Organisation des citoyens pour une nouvelle Haïti has described a range of challenges contributing to the poor state of Haitian prisons, including the chronic dysfunction of the country's courts, persistent staffing shortages, persistent underfunding, the insecurity facing magistrates and court personnel, and the fact that the physical entry and exit points of prisons are not systematically managed. This has resulted in undermining the right to fair and human rights compliant criminal justice proceedings. Multiple reports from international and national human rights bodies, including OHCHR, have repeatedly drawn attention to the poor prison conditions and the abusive treatment of inmates.⁴⁴ In view of these vulnerabilities, a concern is that other prisons could likewise be targeted by gangs in the near term.

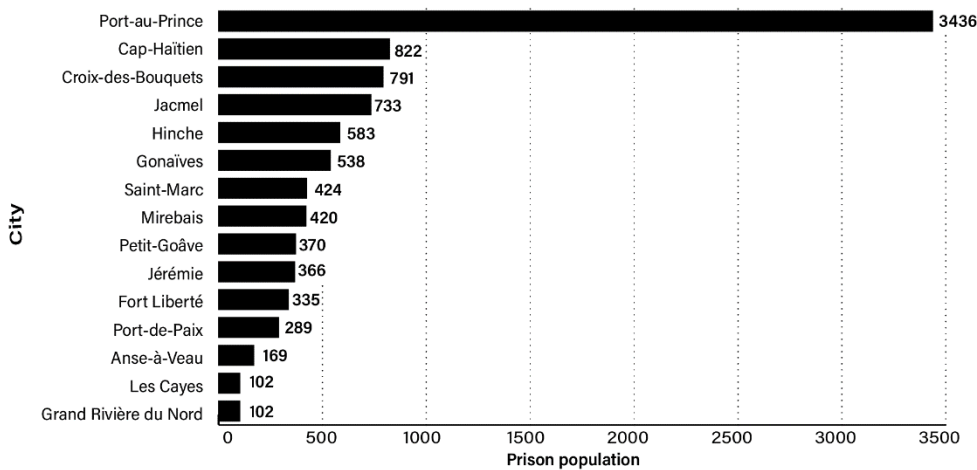
Figure II
Reported prison populations in Haiti as of late 2023



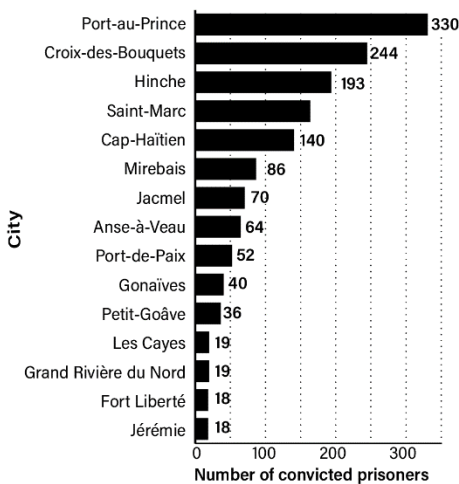
⁴³ See [A/HRC/54/79](#).

⁴⁴ Ibid. See also United States Department of State, “2022 country reports on human rights practices: Haiti”, available at www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/haiti.

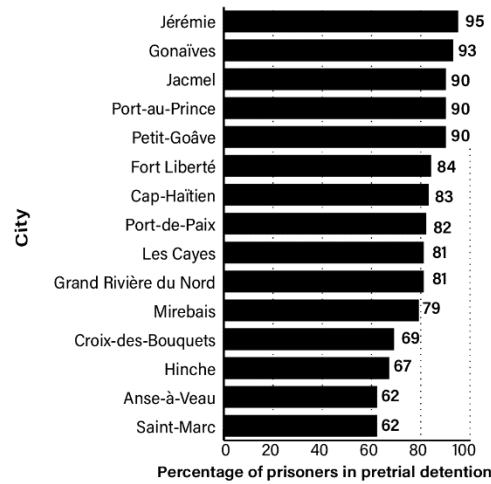
Prison population by city



Number of convicted prisoners by city



Percentage of prisoners in pretrial detention by city



Source: Organisation des citoyens pour une nouvelle Haïti.

Instability, migration, trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling

24. Increasing insecurity in Haiti is triggering migration to neighbouring Caribbean islands and South, Central and North American countries. Haitians are moving by sea, land and air, including commercial and charter flights.⁴⁵ In 2024, significant movements have been recorded, in particular to the United States, the Dominican Republic, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Canada, the Bahamas, Panama, Sint Maarten, Cuba, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and even Papua New Guinea. An estimated 338,486 Haitian nationals reportedly left Haiti to over 20 countries in 2023.⁴⁶ The Panamanian authorities have also reported increased numbers of Haitians seeking to cross the Darién Gap from Colombia to Panama, including 46,422 individuals in 2023.

25. Trafficking in persons and smuggling of Haitian migrants are issues that warrant further investigation and urgent action. Conditions of extreme vulnerability, as stated above, exacerbate sexual exploitation, forced labour, children in *restavek* situations – domestic servitude – as well as recruitment of children by organized criminal groups.

⁴⁵ According to correspondence with the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, on 30 October 2023, the National Civil Aviation Office temporarily suspended all charter flights from Haiti to Nicaragua. The flights had reportedly begun to provide new avenues for Haitian migrants to the United States, following changes to the visa policy of Nicaragua in August 2023.

⁴⁶ According to correspondence with the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security.

These criminal groups exploit porous borders for the purpose of trafficking in firearms and drugs⁴⁷, as well as to smuggle migrants.

26. The number of ships officially navigating the maritime territory of Haiti appears to have declined since 2021, though the presence of dark vessels persists. Between January 2023 and January 2024, the maritime domain awareness system of the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security detected vessels transmitting automatic identification system information within the exclusive economic zone of Haiti engaged in various activities, including 388 instances of dark activity.

27. Given the persistence of illicit activities by dark vessels within Haitian maritime zones, it is believed that non-containerized maritime vessels could be engaged in cross-border trafficking in persons⁴⁸ and migrant smuggling. Involvement of vessels in illicit activity (including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing) may be indicated by certain suspicious behaviours – some of which have been noted by the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, which is monitoring these incidents, including the potential for illicit activities such as narcotics trafficking.

Reviewing illicit financial flows

28. Haiti is affected by a diverse range of illicit financial flows that undermine security, governance and development. While data are often of poor quality and limited, several priority categories of financial crimes stand out, including: (a) corruption in relation to government contracts and public funds; (b) money-laundering involving private companies; (c) illicit flows associated with illicit drugs and illegal firearms trafficking; and (d) the criminal business model deployed by gangs and other armed groups. Other types of illicit flows in Haiti are connected to the use of offshore tax havens by high-net-worth individuals, the flow of hard currency across borders to evade taxes, and the use of banks and money transfer services to launder illicit proceeds.⁴⁹

29. There are various forms of illicit financial flows and associated corruption affecting the Haitian public sector. The public authorities have reported dozens of cases of illicit enrichment, bribery, embezzlement, illegal procurement, insider trading, influence peddling and nepotism since the implementation of the Law on the Prevention and Repression of Corruption of 2014. For example, a review conducted in 2022 by the Anti-Corruption Unit revealed dozens of fictitious government jobs and contracts, fraud and embezzlement and deep-seated political patronage. Nevertheless, very few of these charges result in convictions: the criminal justice system is faced with fundamental challenges, including acute politicization and lack of credentials and capacity among key personnel.⁵⁰ Judicial officials reportedly charge arbitrary fees

⁴⁷ See UNODC, “Haiti’s criminal markets: mapping trends in firearms and drug trafficking”.

⁴⁸ See United States Department of State, “2023 trafficking in persons report: Haiti”, available at www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/haiti.

⁴⁹ See Financial Action Task Force, “Jurisdictions under increased monitoring”, 23 February 2024, available at www.fatf-gafi.org/en/publications/High-risk-and-other-monitored-jurisdictions/Increased-monitoring-february-2024.html; and the related publications on Haiti available at www.fatf-gafi.org/en/countries/detail/Haiti.html.

⁵⁰ See UNODC, “Haiti’s criminal markets: mapping trends in firearms and drug trafficking”; and Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, “Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures: Republic of Haiti – mutual evaluation report”, July 2019, available at www.fatf-gafi.org/content/dam/fatf-gafi/fsrb-mer/CFATF-Mutual-Evaluation-Republic-of-Haiti-2019%20.pdf.coredownload.pdf. See also United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) fact sheet, “Justice Programme: UNDP”, February 2023: “The overall conviction rate in the judicial system stands at 3% with only one conviction (in a corruption case) over the past 15 years”. Available at www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-04/undp-ht-ProgrammeJustice-Factsheet-042023-En.pdf.

to initiate criminal prosecutions, and judges and prosecutors frequently fail to respond to those who cannot afford to pay.⁵¹

30. In 2023, the High Council of the Judiciary processed a total of 164 files as part of the certification process of judges.⁵² Of these, 39 were not certified owing to allegations ranging from lack of moral integrity, abuse of authority, extortion of litigants and lack of ethics to inadequate academic credentials.⁵³ In February 2024, the High Council of the Judiciary processed 60 magistrates' files in the certification process. The decision not to renew the certifications of 12 of the magistrates was attributable to allegations including lack of moral integrity, extortion of litigants, sexual assault and inadequate academic credentials.

31. There are multiple publicly reported cases of Haitian public officials being accused by national authorities of being involved in criminal activities related to the misappropriation of State assets, expropriation of private assets for personal gain, and corruption connected to government contracts. High-level officials have also been accused of seeking to influence the outcome of political appointments and facilitating and soliciting bribes worth millions of dollars.⁵⁴ In January 2024, for example, a Haitian judge issued summons to appear for more than 30 high-ranking officials accused of government corruption, including misappropriation of funds.⁵⁵ Since 2020, several foreign governments imposed economic sanctions, visa restrictions, and travel bans on dozens of Haitian nationals accused of corruption, among other crimes.⁵⁶ However, very few Haitians have been convicted of corruption in the past two decades.

32. In a report produced in February 2024, the Anti-Corruption Unit provides insights into the types of financial crimes that are affecting the public sector.⁵⁷ Specifically, Anti-Corruption Unit investigators observed how individuals sought to conceal criminal proceeds stemming from corruption by introducing them into the oil and gas sector. For example, one way that individuals and entities seek to launder the proceeds of crime is through the construction of gasoline stations and petroleum sales. Several high-ranking politicians failed to disclose the ownership of several gas stations in their declaration of assets. The Anti-Corruption Unit also reported that, in some instances,

⁵¹ UNDP fact sheet, "Justice Programme: UNDP".

⁵² In Haiti, all magistrates are required to undergo a certification process overseen by the High Council of the Judiciary. If a magistrate does not obtain the certification, they are subsequently dismissed from their position. The certification process for magistrates is carried out by the Technical Certification Commission, whose members are chosen by the High Council of the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice. The certification process consists in verifying the magistrate's qualification for the position (required degrees, adherence to appointment criteria) and moral integrity (their reputation, how they are perceived by stakeholders and litigants, allegations of dishonest acts, their assets, or more specifically, suspicions of illicit enrichment based on their lifestyle). See articles 68–70 of the Law on the Statute of the Judiciary of 2007; and article 41 of the Law establishing the High Council of the Judiciary of 2007.

⁵³ See minutes of the work sessions of the High Council of the Judiciary on 13 January, 22 June and 27 September 2023.

⁵⁴ See, for example, United States Department of State, Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act annual report, Federal Register, 23 February 2024, available at www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/02/23/2024-03532/global-magnitsky-human-rights-accountability-act-annual-report. See also minutes of the work sessions of the High Council of the Judiciary from 31 January to 2 February 2024.

⁵⁵ See a copy of the arrest warrant at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qV_JtA-3Brs37UWZDLXZRBRyBabSE9Y9/view. In early 2023, another 30 magistrate judges were expelled in a single week for suspected links to corruption and lack of integrity. See Juhakenson Blaise, "Haiti's highest court expels 30 judges over corruption", *The Haitian Times*, 25 January 2023, available at <https://haitiantimes.com/2023/01/25/haitis-highest-court-expels-28-judges-over-corruption-seeks-to-prosecute/>.

⁵⁶ See Congressional Research Service, "Haiti: recent developments and US policy", 1 February 2024, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47394>.

⁵⁷ See Anti-Corruption Unit, "Les secteurs à risque de blanchiment des avoirs liés à la corruption en Haïti", February 2024 (unpublished).

non-profit organizations established by public officials and their family members are suspected to be used to facilitate money-laundering. The same tactics appear to be adopted by gang leaders, some of whom are suspected of having established foundations to secure public contracts and other proceeds from State institutions.

33. Commercial enterprises are also allegedly implicated in a range of money-laundering schemes in Haiti. In its 2024 report, the Anti-Corruption Unit named multiple registered and unregistered companies that are suspected of involvement in financial crimes.⁵⁸ A wide range of sectors are reportedly linked to money-laundering, including banks, import and export companies, real estate firms, public and private lotteries, nightclubs and groceries, agro-industrial firms, radio stations and communications outlets.⁵⁹ In a separate report covering the period from October 2022 to November 2023, the Central Financial Intelligence Unit documented 258 suspicious transaction reports submitted by reporting entities.⁶⁰ Most of the documented suspicious transaction reports were sent by banks,⁶¹ with only a small number reported by money transfer systems or customs offices. Some of the reported reasons these transactions were declared to be suspicious included “conducting large transactions that are incommensurate with the legal income/economic profile of the entity” and “transactions in neighbourhoods where gangs operate”. Although it was issued several years ago, in its mutual evaluation report of July 2019, the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force rated the effectiveness of anti-money-laundering and combating the financing of terrorism reporting by the private sector as low.⁶²

34. The aforementioned investigation led by the Anti-Corruption Unit highlighted the real estate and gambling sectors as particularly vulnerable to financial crimes. Investigations overseen by the Anti-Corruption Unit singled out several Haitian nationals implicated in financial crimes both abroad and in Haiti, including the laundering of money by purchasing properties or through fraudulent social housing construction projects schemes. Illegal funds were thus derived from direct corruption or misappropriation of public funds. Sizeable corrupt land acquisitions have been documented in the North, Centre and Nippes departments and overseas.⁶³

35. Anti-Corruption Unit investigators indicated that notaries enable corrupt individuals to invest funds obtained through corruption in commercial enterprises or limited companies. At the same time, the Anti-Corruption Unit reported that notaries enable corrupt individuals to invest funds obtained through corruption by formalizing fraudulent transactions. Through an investigative report on the management of the Haitian State Lottery, it was found that 35 concessionary companies operate in the country, most of them stand accused of evading payment of licensing fees and taxes on royalties.⁶⁴ Most lotteries, which involve cash payments, operate virtually, unsupervised by regulatory authorities, and are believed by government authorities to be exploited by criminal actors.⁶⁵

36. A range of financial crimes are associated with the trafficking of narcotics, firearms and ammunition in and outside Haiti. A significant number of Security

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See Central Financial Intelligence Unit, annual report 2022/23 (unpublished).

⁶¹ Examples of banks reporting suspicious transaction reports included Sogexpress, Banque de l'Union Haïtienne, Capital Transfer, Capital Bank, Sogebank, Fond de développement industriel, Unitransfer, MonCash, Prism Transfer, CAM Transfer, Unibank and Vides.

⁶² See Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, “Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures: Republic of Haiti – mutual evaluation report”.

⁶³ See Anti-Corruption Unit, “Les secteurs à risque de blanchiment des avoirs liés à la corruption en Haïti”.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Council and unilateral sanctions against Haitian individuals involve allegations of smuggling illicit products from foreign countries into Haiti. As previously mentioned, in late February 2024, a United States court sentenced a Haitian national for involvement in money-laundering and violating United States export laws, including the export of dozens of firearms and rounds of ammunition. The individual acted as a straw purchaser on behalf of the leader of the 400 Mawozo gang and was forwarded thousands of dollars via money remittance systems by co-conspirators to procure semi-automatic rifles in Orlando, Florida, for transport to Haiti.⁶⁶

37. Criminal groups, including gangs, also engage in financial crimes as part of their portfolio. Such entities are involved in kidnapping, hijacking, extortion, racketeering, exploitation of prostitution and the illegal taxation of private companies and individuals, public offices and representatives, non-governmental organizations and aid workers, and Haitian neighbourhoods and residents. There have been several widely reported incidents of kidnappings of foreigners, including 17 United States and Canadian citizens in 2021 and 2 United States citizens in 2023, which resulted in payouts of between \$25,000 and \$50,000 per hostage.⁶⁷ The ransom depends on the wealth of the person kidnapped.⁶⁸ Close to 2,500 Haitians were kidnapped in 2023, representing an 80 per cent increase compared with the previous year.⁶⁹ Kidnapping has become a profitable industry, with gangs involving subcontractors to control routes to transport and house victims.⁷⁰

38. A major source of revenue for gangs in Haiti is violent extortion. Dozens of gangs have sought to control access to critical infrastructure such as ports and refineries, national highways and city road networks in Port-au-Prince and other cities since mid-2023, precisely to control the movement of illegal products and extract rents from drivers and pedestrians. Gangs offer “protection” to importers, exporters, port operators, shippers, shop owners and others in return for forced payments.⁷¹ Some checkpoints in and out of Port-au-Prince may generate between \$6,000 and \$8,000 a day.⁷² According to local sources, gangs exert a high level of control over the shipment of goods to and from warehouses. Some companies are reportedly paying out between \$5,000 and \$20,000 per week to operate, as well as a percentage fee on containers removed from ships.⁷³ A collateral economic effect is that import duties are also not being paid since gangs are applying pressure on customs officials.

⁶⁶ See United States Embassy in Haiti, “Florida resident sentenced for smuggling firearms from the US to violent Haitian gang that kidnapped 19 Americans”, 28 February 2024, available at <https://ht.usembassy.gov/florida-resident-sentenced-for-smuggling-firearms-from-united-states-to-violent-haitian-gang-that-kidnapped-19-americans/>.

⁶⁷ The Panel of Experts on Haiti reported that some kidnapping payouts have reached as high as \$200,000.

⁶⁸ See Associated Press, “A teacher and 6 members of a religious congregation have been kidnapped in Haiti, officials say”, 24 February 2024, available at <https://apnews.com/article/haiti-congregation-kidnapped-sacred-heart-9f1d401e2ba224f6c014e6aa02bf114e>.

⁶⁹ According to the Centre d’analyse et de recherche en droits de l’homme, there were 857 reported abductions in 2022 and another 1,009 in 2021.

⁷⁰ See Centre d’analyse et de recherche en droits de l’homme, “Bulletin of kidnapping for the third quarter of 2023 (#13) and disaggregated statistics on homicides and violent deaths in Haiti”, 12 October 2023, available at <https://cardh.org/archives/4688>. See also Reuters, “Haiti rights group records three-fold rise in kidnappings for early 2023”, 5 April 2023, available at www.reuters.com/world/americas/haiti-rights-group-records-three-fold-rise-kidnappings-early-2023-2023-04-05/.

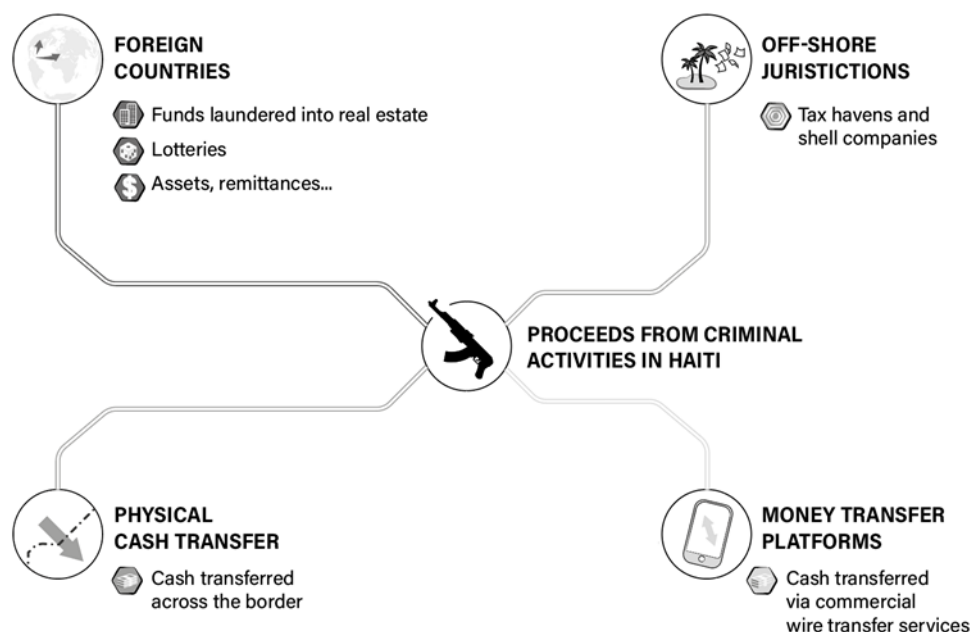
⁷¹ The Panel of Experts on Haiti is examining a range of cases involving gang extortion, including those pertaining to Reynold Deeb and the Deka Group.

⁷² According to BINUH sources.

⁷³ See Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, Ana Paula Oliveira and Matt Herbert, “A critical moment: Haiti’s gang crisis and international responses”, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, February 2024.

39. There are several known mechanisms and techniques to move proceeds from criminal activities out of Haiti. First, there are reportedly several destination countries for the laundering and investment of the proceeds of crime committed in Haiti, including countries in Europe, North America and the Caribbean, often involving the purchase of real estate.⁷⁴ Second, there are also several Haitian nationals, including politically exposed persons, who allegedly act as owners or directors of offshore companies. Third, physical cash transportation is also used, including via the Dominican Republic or directly to the United States. Fourth, direct personal online financial transfers⁷⁵ and the use of money remittance systems, such as Moneygram and Western Union,⁷⁶ for weapons acquisitions have been reported. Trade-based money-laundering, including over- and underinvoicing for imported goods, is supposedly one of the money-laundering mechanisms used, however, there is no solid official confirmation of that.

Figure III
Mechanisms for moving illicit proceeds out of Haiti



Source: UNODC.

40. Despite past and ongoing efforts to prevent and tackle corruption and organized crime, Haiti is struggling to prosecute and convict cases of financial crime. There have been few cases relating to corruption that have reached the adjudication phase over the past 15 years. Only eight convictions have occurred in cases of kidnapping.

⁷⁴ Interviews with representatives of the Anti-Corruption Unit, the Central Financial Intelligence Unit and the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

⁷⁵ See S/2023/674.

⁷⁶ See United States Department of Justice, “‘King’ of violent Haitian gang pleads guilty to gun smuggling and money laundering after government’s case”, 31 January 2024, available at www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/king-violent-haitian-gang-pleads-guilty-gun-smuggling-and-money-laundering-after.

III. Conclusion and recommendations

41. Recalling its recommendations in its previous reports, UNODC reiterates the importance of:

(a) Enhancing capacities of national authorities to collect and analyse firearms seizure data, including e-trace requests to the United States;

(b) Implementing recommendations from previous UNODC reports to enhance capabilities to register firearms and ammunition; increase accountability and integrity measures for control of firearms and ammunition; centralize firearms regulation and management, including for firearms belonging to private security companies; and support the safe and secure storage and management of seized and other illicit firearms and ammunitions;

(c) Amplifying the capacities of border and customs control authorities, including on the Haiti-Dominican Republic border, to effectively detect, investigate firearms trafficking and related offences and improve inter-agency cooperation.

42. In addition, UNODC recommends that Member States across the Caribbean and the broader region also consider, among other measures deemed appropriate, the below actions that could contribute to preventing and reducing the illegal trafficking of firearms and ammunition into Haiti:

(a) Taking steps to disrupt illicit trafficking of arms, ammunition and illicit drugs before they reach the borders of Haiti, including through increased regional information-sharing, mapping of criminal network business models and criminal justice cooperation in investigations and prosecutions related to direct and indirect organizers, financiers and other high-value actors that sustain criminal networks;

(b) Undertaking additional investigation into dark vessels and other suspicious vessel activity. The relevance of international partnerships is particularly acute given the limited surveillance and monitoring of Haitian coastlines and potential vulnerability to illicit activities;

(c) Amplifying regional data collection and analysis of criminal networks involved in Haiti. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution [2692 \(2023\)](#), this could be achieved by expanding the mandate of UNODC to include regional data collection and analysis into firearms, drug trafficking, financial crime, trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and related criminal markets involving Haiti and Caribbean States with whom illicit markets are linked.

43. Regarding illicit financial flows, Member States across the Caribbean and the broader region should consider doing the following:

(a) Strengthening legal and institutional frameworks and national capacities to prevent and fight corruption effectively, in line with the recommendations of the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption;

(b) Developing a methodology for the identification and evaluation of corruption risks across the Haitian public sector, focusing on the analysis of institutional frameworks and operational processes to devise corrective actions and recommendations;

(c) Developing and standardizing existing operational frameworks for conducting complex corruption and financial investigations, comprehensive procedures across criminal justice institutions, encompassing investigation, prosecution and adjudication phases, with clear guidelines for evidence collection,

case management and inter-agency cooperation, to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in combating corruption;

(d) Enhancing the effectiveness of Haitian institutions combating corruption by bolstering their technical and investigative capacities through specialized training and human resources development, while equipping them with essential tools and technology for performing proactive anti-corruption investigations, following up on existing sanctions with actual investigations;

(e) Enhancing the capacities and safeguarding the rights of civil society organizations and journalists dedicated to advocating against and exposing corruption and illicit financial flows; encouraging the establishment of networks among investigative journalists focused on uncovering corruption and illicit financial transactions; and enacting and strengthening legislation that guarantees whistleblower protection;

(f) Enhancing the effectiveness of the institutional framework on anti-money-laundering and combating financing of terrorism through continuous training and mentoring for the Central Financial Intelligence Unit, the Financial and Economic Affairs Bureau and penal chain authorities on the detection, investigation and prosecution of money-laundering and associated predicate offences;

(g) Detecting and confiscating the proceeds of crime that have been moved out of Haiti, laundered and invested in foreign jurisdictions;

(h) Enhancing the capacity of internal control units and audit institutions to prevent and detect corruption within public administration;

(i) Launching a comprehensive nationwide educational initiative aimed at embedding anti-corruption education within the national curriculum across all levels of schooling.

Annex I

Firearms seized in Haiti, January 2021 to January 2024

		<i>Pistol</i>	<i>Revolver</i>	<i>Rifle</i>	<i>Shotgun</i>	<i>Home-made weapons</i>	<i>Total</i>
2021	January	30	2	8	1	9	50
	February	27	1	8	5	–	41
	March	8	2	3	1	5	19
	April	23	4	2	2	8	39
	May	15	5	3	1	3	27
	June	3	1	2	–	6	12
	July	17	1	13	7	7	45
	August	25	3	2	3	4	37
	September	16	6	6	–	12	40
	October	18	1	3	2	2	26
	November	16	–	6	4	3	29
	December	24	3	3	5	1	36
Total for 2021		222	29	59	31	60	401
2022	January	19	–	4	1	1	25
	February	10	2	2	1	6	21
	March	26	5	2	3	5	41
	April	15	5	4	3	5	32
	May	29	6	7	–	6	48
	June	13	1	3	–	2	19
	July	30	3	23	2	1	59
	August	11	–	4	2	2	19
	September	4	1	5	3	4	17
	October	9	2	5	–	6	22
	November	16	2	6	1	1	26
	December	10	1	1	1	–	13
Total for 2022		192	28	66	17	39	342
2023	January	14	1	7	1	2	25
	February	16	4	3	2	–	25
	March	9	4	3	–	5	21
	April	20	–	10	1	–	31
	May	4	1	5	1	1	12
	June	4	2	5	1	4	16
	July	9	2	3	1	4	19
	August	13	1	1	–	1	16
	September	13	2	4	1	1	21
	October	18	3	2	3	5	31

	<i>Pistol</i>	<i>Revolver</i>	<i>Rifle</i>	<i>Shotgun</i>	<i>Home-made weapons</i>	<i>Total</i>
November	10	4	1	–	2	17
December	10	1	6	1	13	31
Total for 2023	140	25	50	12	38	265
2024						
January	5	1	1	2	1	58
Total for 2024 as at January	5	1	1	2	1	58

Source: United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.

Annex II

Reported prison populations in Haiti as of late 2023

	<i>Prison population</i>	<i>Number of convicted prisoners</i>	<i>Percentage of prisoners in pretrial detention</i>	<i>Date reported</i>
Port-au-Prince	3 436	330	90.4	14 November 2023
Cap-Haïtien	822	140	82.9	12 December 2023
Croix-des-Bouquets	791	244	69.1	14 November 2023
Jacmel	733	70	90.4	12 December 2023
Hinche	583	193	66.9	13 December 2023
Gonaïves	538	40	92.5	13 December 2023
Saint-Marc	424	163	61.5	14 November 2023
Mirebalais	420	86	78.5	14 November 2023
Petit-Goâve	370	36	90.2	12 December 2023
Jérémie	366	18	95	12 December 2023
Fort Liberté	335	18	84	13 November 2023
Port-de-Paix	289	52	82	14 November 2023
Anse-à-Veau	169	64	62.1	14 November 2023
Les Cayes	102	19	81.3	12 December 2023
Grande Rivière du Nord	102	19	80.9	12 December 2023
Total	9 480	1 492	87	12 December 2023

Source: Organisation des citoyens pour une nouvelle Haïti.