

## **Haiti's Descent into Chaos: Gang Dominance and the Crisis of Governance**

Haiti is in the grips of an unparalleled crisis, with violence and disorder reaching new heights. This turmoil is largely due to the rise in gang dominance and a glaring lack of governmental control. The situation spiraled following a major prison break that significantly weakened state authority, alongside mounting demands for Prime Minister Ariel Henry to step down. In response to a dramatic gang raid on the country's largest prisons, which led to over 4,700 inmates being set free, the government declared a 72-hour state of emergency on Sunday, 03 March.

Leading the charge in this chaos is Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier and his G9 Family and Allies, who now control 80% of Port-au-Prince. The battle for territory, especially against rival groups, has turned Port-au-Prince into a warzone. Gangs have shown their power by attacking and taking control of the critical infrastructure. Gangs have targeted police stations including the national penitentiary, the Toussaint Louverture International Airport, and even the national soccer stadium.

The assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 left a leadership vacuum that Henry's unelected government had been unable to fill, further diminishing public trust. Haiti's relations with its neighbors, particularly the Dominican Republic, have worsened, leading to increased isolation.

The violence has displaced at least 15,000 people, adding to the roughly 300,000 displaced by gang violence previously. With gangs controlling such a large part of Port-au-Prince, the situation could worsen if Henry does not resign and international intervention fails to materialize. The ongoing chaos fosters illegal trades, including arms, drugs, and human trafficking, as these thrive in lawless environments. This will likely draw more people into the cycle of violence and instability.

The international community's response to Haiti's crisis has been widely criticized as insufficient and slow, struggling to tackle the root causes of the turmoil. This perceived inaction underscores the challenge of mounting an effective intervention to address Haiti's deepening disaster.