

# [***The unexpected announcement of a prime minister divides Haiti's newly created transitional council***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BXK-TPJ1-JC5B-G0M6-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — A surprise announcement that [*revealed Haiti’s new prime minister*](https://apnews.com/article/haiti-transitional-council-leader-1a6dd7f6180fd3489c4d4179b294bdf6) is threatening to fracture a recently installed transitional council tasked with choosing new leaders for the gang-riddled Caribbean country.

Four of seven [*council members with voting powers*](https://apnews.com/article/haiti-transitional-council-members-cfc792b231cd245fa704e4bcc86beb81) said Tuesday that they had chosen Fritz Bélizaire as prime minister, taking many Haitians aback with their declaration and unexpected political alliance.

The council members who oppose Bélizaire, who served as Haiti’s sports minister during the second presidency of René Préval from 2006 to 2011, are now weighing options including fighting the decision or resigning from the council.

A person with direct knowledge of the situation who did not want to be identified because negotiations are ongoing said [*the council’s political accord*](https://apnews.com/article/haiti-ariel-lhenry-resigns-violence-gangs-government-22868c51b5f4c9ca5a8d69fcb5df376b) had been violated by the unexpected move and that some council members are considering other choices as potential prime minister.

The council on Tuesday was scheduled to hold an election and choose its president. But two hours and a profuse apology later, one council member said that not only a council president had been chosen, but a prime minister as well. Murmurs rippled through the room.

The Montana Accord, a civil society group represented by a council member with voting powers, denounced in a statement late Tuesday what it called a “complot” hatched by four council members against the Haitian people “in the middle of the night.”

“The political and economic mafia forces have decided to take control of the presidential council and the government so that they can continue to control the state,” the Montana Accord said.

Haitian ***politics*** have long been characterized by secretive dealings, but many worry the country cannot afford further political instability as [*gangs lay siege to the capital*](https://apnews.com/article/haiti-medical-crisis-gangs-medicine-shortage-dc786ed53e66b6081515474b5b310525) of Port-au-Prince and beyond.

“People change parties (like) they’re changing their shirts,” said François Pierre-Louis, a professor of political science at Queens College in New York and former Haitian politician.

He spoke during an online webinar on Tuesday evening.

Like others, he said he believed that Jean-Charles Moïse, a powerful politician who was a former senator and presidential candidate, was behind Bélizaire’s nomination.

“Interestingly, Moïse, of all the politicians there, is the one calling the shots,” Pierre-Louis said.

Moïse, however, does not sit on the council. His party, Pitit Desalin, is represented by Emmanuel Vertilaire, who is among the four council members who support Bélizaire.

The others are Louis Gérald Gilles, Smith Augustin and Edgard Leblanc Fils, the council’s new president.

They could not be immediately reached for comment.

A document shared with The Associated Press and signed by the four council members who chose the new prime minister state they have agreed to make decisions by consensus. The document is titled, “Constitution of an Indissoluble Majority Bloc within the Presidential Council.”

The move prompted the Fanmi Lavalas party to issue a statement Wednesday calling it a “masquerade” and “conspiracy” to guarantee that PHTK “thugs and their allies retain power\u2026and continue the tradition of corruption.”

“The Lavalas Family strongly rejects the betrayal scandal that occurred on April 30,” the party said.

Fils represents the January 30 political group, which is made up of parties including PHTK, whose members include former President Michel Martelly and slain President Jovenel Moïse. Meanwhile, Augustin represents the EDE/RED political party, founded by former Prime Minister Claude Joseph, and Gilles represents the Dec. 21 agreement, which is associated with f [*ormer Prime Minister Ariel Henry,*](https://apnews.com/video/haiti-port-au-prince-ariel-henry-violence-13afa814516048f4947d5b969cd9e84e) who recently resigned.

Henry was on an official visit to Kenya to push for the U.N.-backed deployment of a police force from the East African country when gangs in Haiti launched coordinated attacks starting Feb. 29.

They have burned police stations, opened fire on the main international airport that remains closed since early March and stormed Haiti’s two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The violence continues unabated in certain part of Port-au-Prince, including the area around the National Palace.

Haitians are demanding that security be a top priority for the council, which is tasked with selecting a new prime minister and Cabinet, as well as prepare for eventual general elections.

But some Haitians are wary of the council and the decisions it’s taking.

Jean Selcé, a 57-year-old electrician, noted that most of the council members are longtime politicians: “Their past is not really positive.”

“I hope their mentality can change, but I don’t believe it will,” he said. “They don’t really love the country. Who’s dying right now? It’s Haitians like me.”

Robert Fatton, a Haitian ***politics*** expert at the University of Virginia, noted that some of the parties represented on the council are responsible for the current chaos in Haiti.

“It’s a contradiction,” he said. “Every time we seem to be in a crisis, we reappoint the same people and hope that they change their ways, but they do not.”

Raising the same criticism is Michael Deibert, author of “Notes From the Last Testament: The Struggle for Haiti,” and “Haiti Will Not Perish: A Recent History.”

He noted in a recent essay that the council is “dominated by the same political currents who have spent the last 25 years driving Haiti over a cliff, taking advantage of impoverished young men in the slums to be used as political bludgeons before - bloated on the proceeds from kidnapping, extortion, drug trafficking and other criminal enterprises - these groups outgrew the necessity of their patrons.”

More than 2,500 people have been killed or injured across Haiti from January to March, according to the U.N.

In addition, more than 90,000 people have fled Port-au-Prince in just one month given the relentless gang violence.

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