

# [***Haiti extends a state of emergency and nighttime curfew to try and repel widespread gang attacks***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BGY-DYR1-JC5B-G3RD-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Haiti’s government said Thursday that it was extending a state of emergency and nighttime curfew to try and curb violent gang attacks that have paralyzed the capital of Port-au-Prince in a fierce battle for political power.

An initial three-day curfew was announced over the weekend, but gangs have continued to attack police stations and other state institutions at night as Haiti’s National Police struggles to contain the violence with limited staff and resources.

“The people with the guns are essentially the current arbiter of Haitian ***politics***,” said Robert Fatton, a Haitian ***politics*** expert at the University of Virginia. “The gangs have won the battle so far.”

The attacks began a week ago, shortly after embattled Prime Minister Ariel Henry agreed to hold general elections in mid-2025 while attending a meeting of Caribbean leaders in Guyana. Gangs have burned police stations, shot up the main international airport, which remains closed, and raided Haiti's two biggest prisons, freeing more than 4,000 inmates.

During that time, Henry had traveled to Kenya to push for the deployment of a U.N.-backed police force from the East African country to help fight gangs in Haiti. But a court in January ruled that the deployment was unconstitutional, and it wasn’t clear if the force would deploy given the worsening violence in Haiti.

Henry is currently in Puerto Rico, where he was forced to land on Tuesday after the armed groups laid siege to the international airport, preventing him from returning.

Dozens of people have died in Haiti's recent gang attacks, including several police officers. The violence also has left more than 15,000 people homeless, in addition to some 300,000 Haitians who lost their homes to gang wars in recent years.

In addition, there were reports that gangs on Thursday looted shipping containers filled with food at the main port in Port-au-Prince, raising concerns that provisions in the capital and elsewhere would dwindle quickly.

“If we cannot access those containers, Haiti will go hungry soon,” said Laurent Uwumuremyi, Haiti director for Mercy Corps.

The operator of the port, Caribbean Port Services SA, said in a statement Thursday that it was suspending all operations because of “malicious acts of sabotage and vandalism.”

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the insecurity has forced the World Food Program to suspend its maritime transport service, which is currently the only means of moving food and medical supplies for aid organizations from Port-au-Prince to other parts of the country. Two dozen trucks with equipment, medical supplies and food are stuck at the port in Port-au-Prince, he noted.

He also said the U.N. special envoy for Haiti, Maria Isabel Salvador, is calling for the immediate deployment of a U.N.-backed force "to prevent the country from plunging even further into chaos, as gang violence in Haiti has reached unprecedented levels.”

Salvador remains in close contact with the prime minister, the government and other parties across the political spectrum “to encourage a peaceful and constructive inter-Haitian dialogue to promote a nationally-owned political solution to this crisis,” Dujarric said.

Meanwhile, a U.S. Defense official said a Marine Corps Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team, or FAST team, was to be deployed to Haiti to protect the U.S. Embassy. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the deployment. A final decision on the deployment has not yet been made.

“The country is falling apart, and everyone is watching,” said Fatton, who criticized the U.S. government for not taking action more than two years ago and lamented the current state of Haiti. “I am dumbfounded. I thought I had seen everything.”

Gunfire still echoed in parts of Port-au-Prince on Thursday, with blazing tires blocking some areas as people demanded new leaders for the battered country. Schools and businesses remained closed, but calm returned to a handful of neighborhoods that saw some stores and banks open under a limited schedule.

Germain André, a 40-year-old shop owner who sells rice, oil, beans, milk and other basic goods, said he is having trouble finding provisions given dwindling food supplies across Port-au-Prince as people move around in fear.

“Traveling is very scary,” he said, noting that armed groups have stopped cars. “No one is secure. Everyone is scared of each other now. We don’t know if they’re gang members.”

Haiti's worsening crisis prompted the Royal Bahamas Police Force to announce Thursday that it had set up a blockade in the southeast part of the archipelago given the two jail breaks and the “mass displacement” of Haitians due to the ongoing violence. The Bahamas, about 850 kilometers (530 miles) to the north, is a popular destination for Haitians fleeing their country.

On Wednesday, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the U.S. has asked Henry to “move forward on a political process that will lead to the establishment of a presidential transitional council that will lead to elections.”

Shortly afterward, U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller echoed her remarks, saying Henry “needs to expedite the transition to empowered and inclusive governance.”

Henry has not made any public comments since the gang attacks began last week.

On Thursday, Guyanese President Irfaan Ali said Caribbean leaders have been working around-the-clock to help find a political consensus to alleviate Haiti's crisis as they continue to talk to local stakeholders.

“It is indeed a distressing situation for the region, but we have a responsibility to do everything we can do to enable the Haitian people to find a consensus and to find a path that is Haitian-led and Haitian-owned in bringing together a level of stability and normalcy that the Haitian people so richly deserve,” he said.

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Coto reported from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Associated Press writers Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations, Tara Copp in Washington, D.C. and Bert Wilkinson in Georgetown, Guyana contributed to this report.

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