

# [***Haiti's prime minister is resigning. Will that bring calm to the gang-ravaged country?***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJ1-3ST1-DY7V-G04P-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry [*announced his resignation*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/11/americas/haiti-pm-ariel-henry-resigns-gang-violence-intl-hnk/index.html) following a meeting of regional Caribbean leaders on Monday, bowing to the inevitable as law and order in the country collapsed and international pressure grew for him to step aside.

Henry has been in the US territory of Puerto Rico since last week, unable to return to Haiti from a visit to Kenya as violence swept the country in his absence.

In Henry's place, a transitional council will be established and endowed with some powers of the presidency - including the ability to name a new interim prime minister. The resulting government would be expected to eventually hold elections in the country for a complete political reset.

It is unclear how long it could take to establish a transitional council to begin the transfer of power, though Haiti's former PM Claude Joseph told CNN that it could be created within 24 hours.

According to a statement by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), the council will include representatives of various political factions as well as non-voting observers from religious and civil organizations.

A senior US State Department official said Tuesday the seven political factions have 24 hours to let CARICOM know who their representative to the transitional council will be.

Will the deal restore order?

The big question is whether these changes can bring calm to Haiti, and put a stop to the terrible violence tearing apart Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince.

Haiti has been under a state of emergency since groups attacked the country's largest prison in Port-au-Prince earlier this month, killing and injuring police and prison staff and allowing some 3,500 inmates to escape.

One gang leader, [*Jimmy "Barbecue" Cherizier*](https://cnn.com/interactive/2024/03/world/haiti-gang-violence-cnnphotos/), took credit for the attack and said the jailbreak was an attempt to overthrow Henry's government.

Gangs now control 80% of Haiti's capital, according to United Nations estimates, and continue to fight for the rest. While Henry was out of the country, gangs [*laid siege to the country's main airport*](https://cnn.com/2024/03/01/americas/haiti-gang-violence-shootings-escalation-intl-hnk) to prevent his safe return.

The chaos has forced tens of thousands to flee their homes, adding to the more than 300,000 already displaced by gang violence.

The country's gangs have historic links in ***politics*** and business, so a transitional period of jockeying for power could potentially mean even more turbulence in the streets.

"The political-criminal connections are the important topic here: what is happening in Haiti right now is political. We have to think in terms of ***politics***. We have to analyze what is happening through a political lens," Romaine LeCoeur, senior expert at the Swiss-based Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, told CNN about Haiti's exploding violence, ahead of the CARICOM announcement.

Will the gangs be part of the government?

According to the CARICOM statement, the transitional council will include representatives of the Montana Group, Fanmi Lavalas, Collectif, Petit Dessalinnes, EDE and December 21 factions. It will also include two non-voting observers from the religious sector and civil society.

The statement also specifies that no one who has been charged or convicted in any jurisdiction can serve on the council - a condition that would exclude many prominent figures, including gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, also known as Barbeque, who has been long seen as having political aspirations and has taken credit for the latest wave of gang attacks in Port-au-Prince.

The announcement has been hailed as step forward by the US and other regional actors. But key voices in the latest unrest have not taken it as well, despite Henry's resignation.

In a warning late Monday night, Cherizier announced that the alliance of gangs known as Viv Ansanm would not recognize any government resulting from the CARICOM agreement.

"'Viv Ansanm' will not recognize any government resulting from these meetings," Cherizier said in a video Monday night after the CARICOM agreement was announced. "It is up to the Haitian people to designate the personalities who will lead the country."

And an adviser to Guy Philippe, the former rebel leader who recently returned to Haiti and called for "revolution" against Henry last month, warned that any new government that does not include Philippe would result in his supporters "setting the city on fire."

The CARICOM statement also imposed significant limitations on participation in Haiti's new government, which could inflame anger or spark accusations of meddling in a country with a long and tortured history of foreign interference.

The joint Caricom statement specifies that no one who opposes the United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing a foreign military mission to Haiti can sit on the council.

This comes after Kenya, which has been tasked with leading the operation, said its own troops were now in "pre-deployment" mode.

The senior State Department official said Tuesday, "we're going to take this one step at a time."

"Only one half of this equation is democracy and governance and the other half is security and that's why we're going to continue to push on the (multinational security support mission)," they added.

A Kenyan spokesperson told CNN the deployment had been put on hold because "without a political administration in Haiti, there is no anchor on which a police deployment can rest."

But despite the Kenyan official's comment, the US believes the Kenyan peacekeeping mission to Haiti will move forward "without delay."

"What the Kenyan government said in its statement is that they have to have a government with which to collaborate," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said at a press briefing. He said the appointment of a transition council and a new government would happen "in the very near future," clearing the way for Kenya to deploy its forces.

How did the deal come about?

Henry made an initial decision on Friday that he planned to step down, according to a senior US administration official. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken held talks with Henry and the president of Kenya, William Ruto. Talks with regional leaders continued, leading into the emergency CARICOM meeting on Monday.

That meeting on Monday took more than seven hours and involved engagement with "nearly 40 Haitian stakeholders" and the CARICOM heads, according to a US State Department official.

"The conversations with stakeholders were intense," the US senior administration official said, noting that there were "multiple configurations discussed" for the transitional council.

The senior State Department official said Tuesday that most of Monday's meeting was focused on the composition of the transitional presidential council.

"There was a moment in the high-level meeting in which the Secretary and other interlocutors from countries were huddled in a corner literally going over the make-up of this council on a on a scratch piece of paper, and what the sort of representation, the various factions would look like," the official said.

The senior administration official said there were conversations with Henry during the course of the day on Monday "about his plans and the announcement that he had told CARICOM leaders and us that he would make - to step down and hand power to a new transitional entity, presidential college, as they were referring to it in Haiti."

Blinken was among the officials who spoke with Henry on Monday.

According to the senior administration official, Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley called Henry, "they talked for a while and then she asked the Secretary to talk to him."

"Their conversation was basically the secretary asking him what were his plans? They talked about the way forward in terms of a transitional government, and the decision that he had previously communicated to the Secretary about his plans to step down, and he said that he was consulting his cabinet," the official described.

Henry met with his cabinet at 8:30p ET Monday to discuss his decision, this official said.

Will Ariel Henry return to Haiti?

Henry has been in Puerto Rico since last Monday, and the US official said they expected that Henry would want to return home at some point. From the US perspective, "he's free to stay where he is. He's free to travel."

But at the moment, it's clear that it's too dangerous for Henry to travel - gangs who oppose Henry's rule are rampant in Port-au-Prince, and Henry was still in Puerto Rico on Monday night.

"There was a lot of discussion among Haitians stakeholders of the importance of there not being reprisals against Prime Minister Henry or his allies," the official said.

The United States will contribute $300 million to the Kenyan-led multinational security mission,  [*Blinken said*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/11/americas/haiti-us-blinken-security-mission-intl-latam/index.html) after attending the CARICOM meeting on Monday. He also announced an additional $33 million in "humanitarian assistance for the people of Haiti."

The US funds for the multinational security support mission "allow us to advance preparations for the logistics, the equipment and procurement for the Kenyan-led MSS to deploy," the official said.

Who will be on the transitional council?

The Transitional Presidential Council, which will aim to lay the foundations for future elections in Haiti, will comprise seven voting members and two non-voting observers.

One representative from each of the following groups will make up the seven voting members: Collectif, December 21, EDE, Lavalas, Montana, Pitit Desalin, and the private sector.

One of the non-voting observers will be from civil society and one from the InterFaith community, according to the CARICOM agreement.

The individuals representing each group have yet to be announced.

Two groups with voting seats on the council, December 21 and Montana, were part of previous unsuccessful attempts to create a transitional government, known as the [*December 21 Accord*](https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15181.doc.htm) and the [*Montana Accord*](https://www.csis.org/analysis/haiti-betting-montana-accord).

The December 21 Accord was signed by a coalition of business, civil society and political actors, and current Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry in 2022. The accord hoped to have an elected government in office by February 7, 2024. However, Henry did not give any official power to the three-person council.

The Montana group is led by Haitian economist Fritz Jean and made up of a coalition of Haitian leaders who came together after the 2021 assassination of former Haitian President Jovenel Moise. The coalition was named after the Montana Hotel in Port-au-Prince where the group used to hold meetings.

Fanmi Lavalas (FL), or Lavalas Family, is the political party of former Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide. The party identifies itself as a social-democratic political party. Lavalas, meaning "flood," is the term used to describe the popular movement that first brought Aristide into power in 1990. Haitian politician Maryse Narcisse has been one of the main faces of the political party since Aristide returned to Haiti from exile in 2011.

Pitit Dessalines is a Haitian political party led by Jean-Charles Moise, who ran for president in 2015 and 2016. The political party was named after Haitian revolutionary leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines.

Les Engages pour le Developpement (EDE) is a Haitian political party created by former Haitian prime minister Claude Joseph. EDE was founded in 2021.

The Collectif is a coalition of political parties who oppose Ariel Henry and has been advocating for a transitional government since the assassination of former President Jovenel Moise in 2021. The coalition has yet to put forth a group leader.

CNN's Michael Rios contributed reporting

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