

# [***Who Is Ariel Henry? Controversial Haiti Prime Minister Stepping Down After Delaying Elections For Years***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJ6-0RW1-JBCM-F50M-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Zachary Folk, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** Henry became acting president after the assassination of Jovenel Moise in 2021, and the nation has not held elections since 2016.

**Body**

**Topline**

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry announced he would resign Tuesday after a presidential transitional council was appointed bowing to internal pressure from gang leaders and opposition politicians after a mass jailbreak left the country in chaos for two weeks and prevented him from returning from a trip abroad.

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Henry became acting president after the assassination of Jovenel Moise in 2021, and the nation has not held elections since 2016.

Getty Images

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**Key Facts**

Delivering a video message posted on hisaccount on X, formerly known as Twitter, Henry announced Tuesday morning that his government would remove itself immediately after the country established a transitional presidential council but didn t immediately say who would make up the council or when they would take over.

Henry, a 74-year-old neurosurgeon who entered ***politics*** in the early 2000s, was appointed prime minister on July 5, 2021 two days before Haitian President Jovenel Moise was assassinated by a group of Colombian mercenaries prompting him to take over later that month as acting president.

Haiti has not held elections since 2016, and the nation s Senate termexpired in January 2023 meaning Haiti has not had an elected official in a position of power in over a year.

Henry was originally supposed to step down as acting president on Feb. 7, but the date arrived and the Haitian leader remained in his position, leading to massprotests and violenceacross the country.

Henry, who was abroad when the recent jailbreak took place, has been unable to return to Haiti or its neighboring Dominican Republic, and was forced to land in Puerto Rico last week.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for Henry to support a political transition last week, and metwith other Caribbean leadersin Jamaica on Monday to outline a plan for Haiti s transitional government and deployment of international security forces.

**Key Background**

The current crisis in Haiti began on Feb. 28, when armed gangs staged a mass jailbreak at two major prisons, freeing about 4,000 gang members and plunging the Caribbean nation into chaos. Fighting between gang members and police has engulfed the streets of Port-au-Prince, where gangs like the notoriousG9 Family and Alliescontrol an estimated 80% of the city. Gang members have besieged national landmarks including the city s central bank, the national soccer stadium and the presidential residence at the National Palace. They also effectively shut down Toussaint Louverture Airport, Haiti s largest airport, which has prevented Henry from landing and desperate Haitians from fleeing by plane. On Sunday, the U.S. militaryevacuated non-essential personnelfrom the embassy in Port-au-Prince due to heightened gang violence in the neighborhood near U.S. embassy compounds and near the airport.

**How Is The International Community Responding?**

In October 2023, the U.N. announced the creation of a first-of-its-kindmultinational security support missionto help fight the rising gang violence in Haiti. Instead of deploying peacekeeping forces, the U.N. would instead rely on police officers and other personnel from other international partners, led by a force of 1,000 officers from Kenya. However, the support mission has so far failed to get off the ground since the announcement. In January, Kenya s High Court declared the police deployment illegal under Kenyan law, prompting Henry to travel to the east African nation to negotiate a new deal. The jailbreak and shutdown of Haiti s airport happened as Henry was meeting with Kenyan President William Ruto. The U.S. continues to support the proposed U.N. mission, with Blinken also announcing on Monday the U.S. would double its commitment, providing a total of $200 million for international forces to secure Haiti, as well as an additional $33 million for humanitarian aid.

**Tangent**

One of the leading voices calling for Henry s resignation isJimmy Barbecue Cherizier, a former police officer who leads the G9 Family and Allies, a gang coalition he formed in 2020 that has terrorized Port-au-Prince s lower income neighborhoods for years. Cherizier has been sanctioned by the U.S. and U.N. for his role in a massacre in the La Saline neighborhood in 2018, which left an estimated 71 people dead, 400 buildings destroyed and at least seven women raped.

**Further Reading**

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