

Demonstrations Escalate in Haiti Demanding the Resignation of Washington-backed Regime

Spike in fuel prices and discontent within police force results in violent clashes

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A new round of popular unrest in Haiti on October 27 has left two people dead and many others injured.

On October 25 and 27, the embassies of France and Canada were firebombed by angry crowds.

Since August the rising price of fuel sparked protests calling for economic relief and the immediate resignation of President Jovenal Moïse.

Moïse, who represents the Haitian Tet Kale party, is accused of corruption and failure to address the monumental social problems facing the Caribbean nation which is still the least developed in the Western Hemisphere. Over the recent period members of the police have also demonstrated against low salaries and the lack of employment benefits such as health insurance.

During the events of October 27, those marching against the government were fired upon by an unidentified individual, fatally wounding one person. The crowd set upon the assailant and killed him in retaliation.

Police officers prior to their demonstration had presented a list of grievances at the Haitian National Police headquarters in Port-au-Prince. One of the officers was quoted by the French Press Agency (AFP) as saying:

“Our wages are miserable. We don’t have insurance. We have an insurance card but at every hospital we go to, we have to pay.”

The current administration in Haiti has been under scrutiny since it came to power in February 2017 amid accusations of malfeasance. A nationwide rebellion in the early months of 2019 shook the foundations of the administration.

Unrest during the final days of October represents the seventh straight week of renewed opposition activity. Over two million children have not been able to attend school due to the fuel shortages and demonstrations while the humanitarian situation inside the country is worsening.



Source: author

Moïse has appealed to the United States for material assistance. The U.S. appears to maintain its support for the government while calling for dialogue between the opposition forces and the current administration.

In a radio broadcast on October 28, Moïse told the listening audience that:

“I am hooked on reforms. I want to talk about constitutional reform, for example. I want to talk about the reform of the energy sector, the digitization of the public administration. Today we are in an acute crisis, but we can take advantage of this crisis to make this crisis an opportunity. We need stability in the country and to find that stability, we have to attack the system.” (See [this](#))

Opposition groups have rejected negotiations with Moïse and are unwilling to end the demonstrations until the president resigns. In a press conference on October 28, Moïse pleaded for calm and the beginning of talks with those committed to his removal.

Former Senator and Mayor of Milot, Jean-Charles Moïse, has been projected as the leader of the opposition in Haiti. Opposition figure Moïse, no acknowledged relations to the president, is the leader of the Pitit Dessalines Party and the alliance known as the Force of the Opposition Progressive (FOP).

The opposition leader ran unsuccessfully for president during the 2015-2016 controversy over the election outcomes. Many people felt that the elections were rigged causing great consternation among the population.

The Pitit Dessalines leader Jean-Charles Moïse traveled to Venezuela earlier in 2019 and held meetings with members of the government. After returning to Haiti he declared that the opposition forces would initiate a new round of demonstrations demanding the resignation of President Moïse.

Demonstrations taking place largely in Port-au-Prince have enjoyed the participation of a broad range of political parties, civil society organizations and religious groupings. There have been several attempts as well to remove President Moïse from office within the parliament which have not been successful due to the lack of sufficient votes.

The U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince has pledged to provide assistance. Nonetheless, this does not address the major demands of the opposition for the creation of a new government.

The fuel crisis in Haiti is hampering transportation for motorists along with the inability of people to use generators for electricity and stoves. Such difficulties are preventing humanitarian agencies from traveling to areas where people are stranded without adequate food stuffs, medical supplies for hospitals and other essentials.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), one of the U.S.-based humanitarian organizations which have operated in Haiti since the 1950s, says that the situation is becoming more desperate. CRS has 250 people working in its Port-au-Prince offices.

According to a report issued by CRS on October 17:

“The situation in Haiti is dire and is deteriorating quickly. Farmers can’t get their crops to market. There is a widespread fuel shortage caused by fuel not coming into the country. And hospitals and schools have been forced to close. What’s more, anti-poverty programs run by CRS and other non-profits have virtually come to a halt. The political crisis is compounded by surging inflation which has driven up costs for food and other necessities.” (See [this](#))

This same report went on to say as well that:

“While still mired in poverty, the country in recent decades has avoided the repeated coups and violent revolutions of the past. It has slowly recovered from the 2010 earthquake and in doing so has built in more resilience to future natural disasters. Literacy rates have shown significant improvements, and farmers in the south are beginning to increase productivity by innovating with crops such as cacao.”

Amid the months-long demonstrations, general strikes and destruction of property, acting Prime Minister Jean-Michel Lapin resigned in July after only serving for four months. Lapin was never confirmed by the parliament. He was succeeded by another acting Prime Minister Fritz-William Michel whose confirmation by parliament has been indefinitely postponed.

The Role of the U.S. and the United Nations in the Ongoing Crisis

These heightened demonstrations and violent unrest comes in the aftermath of the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUSTAH) which has deployed thousands of troops in the country since June 2004. The UN presence in Haiti followed an invasion during February 2004 which was led by the United States with the assistance of Canada and France. The mission of the UN in the country is now directed by the Integrated Office in Haiti.

Thousands of imperialist troops intervened to overthrow the government of President of

Jean Bertrand Aristide who was the co-founder of the mass-based Fanmi Lavalas party. The U.S. under the then President George W. Bush, Jr. claimed that the invasion was designed to halt the purported political chaos in the country and to prevent Haiti being utilized for drug trafficking.

However, the intervention followed a pattern by the Bush administration which sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003) and then Haiti. President Aristide was kidnapped by Pentagon forces and deported to the Central African Republic (CAR). He was later given political asylum in the Republic of South Africa under the then President Thabo Mbeki who had recently attended the Bicentennial commemoration of the Haitian Revolution of 1804.

Although Aristide was eventually allowed to return to Haiti, the political situation inside the country has not been normalized. Earlier in 1991, the Haitian military had staged a coup against Aristide after he had been in office for only few months. Taking refuge in the U.S., he was later re-installed by Washington under the then President Bill Clinton in 1994. Restrictions placed on the Aristide government by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made effective governance impossible.

Although the U.S. is supporting the Moise administration there has been almost no assistance to the Haitian people. Unemployment remains high and the conditions imposed by the IMF and other financial institutions have kept the country in perpetual debt.

Venezuela Fuel Assistance Looted by Current Regime

An effort to provide material assistance to Haiti by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was exploited by corrupt politicians before and during the Moise administration. Although the current president has denied any knowledge of embezzlement of the resources provided by Venezuela, Haitian Senatorial and Superior Court investigative reports issued on the PetroCaribe scandal in early 2018 says otherwise.

The disruption of normal relations with Venezuela is in line with the hostility shown towards Caracas by successive U.S. administrations. Under the current President Donald Trump several attempts have been made to topple the government of President Nicolas Maduro.

Venezuelan embassies representing the United Socialist Party (PSUV) government in Caracas have been shuttered at the aegis of the U.S. authorities. A series of draconian sanctions against Venezuela has created economic problems inside the country along with the Republic of Cuba, which has close fraternal relations with Caracas.

Until the influence of the U.S. is overthrown in Haiti there will not be any prospects for peace and stability in the country. Such a situation necessitates the formation of a broad-based alliance aimed at the establishment of a government of national unity committed to the interests of the workers, farmers and youth of Haiti.

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