

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54th SESSION

Interactive dialogue on the interim report of the High Commissioner on the human rights situation in Haiti (with the participation of the independent human rights expert)

10 October 2023

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**, while reporting recent positive developments of the Government, expressed her concern about the continued and widespread deterioration of the human rights situation in Haiti and its impact on the region. The magnitude of armed violence, which has been exacerbated since President Moïse's assassination in July 2021, now affects all communes in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, including those considered safe until recently, spilling over into neighboring regions.

She informed that gangs are threatening the authority of the State at an unprecedented scale, having access to sophisticated high-caliber firearms and ammunition trafficked into Haiti, with brutal attacks committed against the population, including killings, mutilations, and kidnappings. Gangs are increasingly using sexual and gender-based violence to instill fear among the population. To date, victims of sexual violence, mostly women and girl survivors, continue to lack protection and access to adequate health care, psycho-social counseling, and economic support while impunity remains the norm.

Widespread corruption, combined with poor oversight, has penetrated most of the State's entities, including those in charge of law enforcement. Another issue of concern is the sharply deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground, with widespread insecurity impeding access to basic services, including education and health.

In conclusion, she affirmed that restoring security is a priority, any long-lasting change requires addressing the root causes of the crisis. The response must be guided by human rights. She urged the government to demonstrate that it is at the service of its people by deploying all its efforts to remedy the challenges they face with determination, as guaranteed by the international instruments ratified by the State.

Mr. William O'Neill, the Independent human rights expert on Haiti, affirmed that the human rights situation is dire but not hopeless. The gangs, which control most of the capital, have a devastating impact on the countryside as well, obstructing roads and preventing vital shipments of food, medicine, and other supplies from reaching rural areas. Consequently, the entire country is suffering. Two key reasons for the violence: one is rampant **corruption** pervasive throughout state institutions and the private sector in Haiti; and the second, is **impunity** – a failure to hold people accountable for their crimes and for neglecting to perform their duties as officials and government representatives.

Haiti (Country concerned) welcomed the reports and the recommendations presented. It affirmed that the armed gangs are conducting increasing barbarian acts. Women and young girls are repeatedly raped and kept in captivity. The justice system is facing serious human rights and logistical problems; it is not able to deal with cases in the timeframe set by procedure rules. The Unit to combat corruption is conducting workshops, and trainings to prevent it.

Interactive dialogue

The majority of countries were alarmed by the continued escalation of violence and brutality of gang attacks against the population. **Norway** added a report on the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Haiti. The humanitarian situation remains dire, with millions of Haitians experiencing food insecurity, with many children suffering from severe acute malnutrition, said **Malta, and the US**.

Humanitarian actors must be given safe, rapid, and unimpeded access to those in need, and armed gangs must make sure that basic humanitarian standards are met. Effective accountability for all human rights violations and abuses is essential. Support to help Haiti restore security and the rule of law is much needed and the international community's efforts to ensure a multinational security support mission are urgently deployed. **The EU** added that criminal groups terrorize the population and prevent them from fully enjoying their rights, particularly women and young girls who are victims of sexual violence. The Haitian National Police is not able to fight gangs alone.

Among the Latin American countries, Argentina, supporting the creation of the mandate of the Independent Expert to improve the complex situation in the country, remained concerned over the fact that gangs have threatened the authority of the State on a scale never seen before, undermining its monopoly on the use of force and its responsibility to provide basic security to the population, in particular, women and girls. **Costa Rica** reported that criminal gangs also target and kill human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and aid workers, and recruit children for their criminal activities. **Venezuela** stressed that Haiti faces challenges associated with its internal security that have generated disruption in the provision of basic services, so it is necessary to address the situation to guarantee stability while addressing its most pressing needs. It is essential to develop capacities in favor of the most vulnerable groups of the population such as women, children, and the elderly, as well as provide young people with education and employment opportunities that allow them to escape poverty.

The Dominican Republic, while noting findings and information of the HC's report, rejected the many mentions and references concerning armed trafficking toward Haiti, as well as responsibility for the sexual exploitation of women and girls. **China** expressed concern over the dire human rights situation in Haiti. It is imperative that the Government and the political parties should preserve the interests of the country and its people, through consultations and dialogue. **The Russian Federation** stressed the main cause of Haiti's crisis: years of destructive external influence that imposed solutions and political models ignoring national interests and cultures.

NGOs noted a developing trend whereby the body of the deceased is removed from the scene and 'disappeared' by those responsible for the killing. This practice means the total number of killings may be significantly higher than those recorded. **An NGO** affirmed that killings, kidnappings, and sexual violence by criminal groups have skyrocketed. The justice system barely functions. Impunity reigns. The urged UN member states to support Haitian judicial officials focused on investigating and prosecuting the most serious crimes, and to ensure strong protection measures for vulnerable groups at risk of sexual violence or retaliation, including children associated with criminal groups. Those lawfully arrested and held prior to trial should be detained in secure, humane facilities.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (29 country delegations):

Norway (on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic states), European Union, Bahamas (on behalf of CARICOM), Ecuador, Costa Rica, Malta, Colombia, Switzerland, United States, Chile, France, Canada, Belgium, China, Russian Federation, Venezuela, Peru, United Kingdom, Argentina, Spain, Kenya, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Luxembourg, Dominican Republic, Mexico, New Zealand, Brazil.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (4):

Every Casualty Worldwide, International Human Rights Internship Program, Rencontre Africaine pour la defense des droits de l'homme, Human Rights Watch.

International organizations: Haiti Office for Protection of Citizens.

To watch the full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).