

The Population of Cité Soleil in the Grip of Gang Violence

Investigative report on human rights abuses committed by gangs in the zone of Brooklyn from July to December 2022

Executive summary

- 1- For more than six months, residents of several neighborhoods in the commune of Cité Soleil (in the metropolitan zone of Port-au-Prince) have been the victims of armed violence that has taken various forms: killing, injury, disappearance, sexual violence, restriction of movement, and destruction of property. Far from being random, this violence is caused by clashes between two gang coalitions and related to political, economic, and personal interests in subjugating the population and exercising territorial control over the commune.
- 2- Between 8 July and 31 December 2022, in the neighborhood of Brooklyn alone, which was particularly targeted by gangs during this period, at least 552 people were killed, injured, or reported missing (263 killed, 285 injured and four reported missing)¹. In addition, dozens of women and girls were collectively raped and hundreds of people displaced, some of whom saw their homes destroyed or looted.
- 3- During the first weeks of July, the Brooklyn neighborhood recorded intense attacks carried out by the gang "G-9 in Family and Allies" (hereafter, the G-9). The following weeks and months witnessed an almost permanent climate of terror due to the use of snipers that killed, at random, any person who passed in their field of vision.
- 4- At the same time, the G-9 used other tactics to restrict the movement of people and block access to basic goods, notably to food and water, but also to sanitation services, such as garbage collection. These tactics have further impoverished the local population and worsened an already extremely unsanitary environment, thus promoting the spread of infectious diseases. As such, cases of cholera were recorded in the Brooklyn neighborhood as early as the beginning of October. Health services had not previously documented any in the country since 2019.
- 5- In the face of this armed violence, the Haitian National Police (HNP) only intervened in a limited way to restore public order and protect the residents living in the neighborhoods of Cité Soleil. Without adequate human and material resources, the HNP is not able to eradicate the territorial expansion of gangs, hence the need for immediately strengthen the capacity of the Haitian National Police with coordinated international support, and urgently consider the deployment of a time-limited support force under conditions consistent with human rights, as well as a comprehensive and precise action plan.
- 6- While the judicial police were quick to open an investigation into the abuses committed against the populations, particularly those related to sexual violence, the judges of the Port-au-Prince jurisdiction, in which Cité Soleil is located, have not, as of the date of publication of this report, taken any procedural steps to arrest and try the alleged perpetrators.
- 7- State social services have also faced many challenges in responding quickly to the deteriorating humanitarian situation caused by the violence. Community associations and non-governmental

¹ 466 men, 50 women, and 36 children

organizations, already present in the affected neighborhoods of Cité Soleil, increased their operations as soon as security conditions allowed, despite their sometimes very small budgets. Similarly, the United Nations humanitarian agencies were able to organize one-off distributions beginning at the end of July, after gaining access to the affected neighborhoods of Brooklyn.

- 8- However, based on interviews conducted by the Human Rights Service (HRS) of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) with the actors concerned, it was established that some of the most vulnerable populations affected by the violence were not able to benefit from humanitarian aid, due in particular to the ambiguous role played by the social foundations present in Cité Soleil.
- 9- Strongly established in the neighborhoods of Cité Soleil for several years due to the absence of state services, these foundations, under the control of certain gangs, have been able to use some of this aid to force young men and women to join the ranks of these gangs. These foundations often leverage their social and charitable work to present themselves to the population as “benefactors.” Faced with this situation, some humanitarian actors have put in place various mechanisms to ensure that the aid is not capitalized by gangs and that it reaches the most vulnerable populations.
- 10- In an effort to provide appropriate solutions to the human rights abuses suffered by the populations of Cité Soleil, and particularly those of the Brooklyn neighborhood, BINUH and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) propose the following recommendations:

To the Haitian authorities:

- 10.1- Pursue an inclusive dialogue among all concerned Haitian actors in order to find a lasting solution to the multidimensional crisis that Haiti is undergoing, particularly through the organization of free and transparent elections so that democratic institutions are restored.
- 10.2- Provide the Haitian National Police (HNP) with the financial, material, and human resources necessary to conduct regular patrols and maintain a sustainable presence at strategic intersections in Cité Soleil to limit gang operations and reassure the population.
- 10.3- Support the Special Commission of the Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (DCPJ) to conclude, as soon as possible, its investigation into human rights abuses against local populations, as well as to identify and arrest the alleged perpetrators, including those who provided support to the gangs in the form of arms, ammunition, strategic advice, or other.
- 10.4- Take the necessary measures to establish a specialized judicial task force within the Haitian courts and tribunals, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Superior Council of the Judiciary, in order to judge the perpetrators of the crimes committed in Cité Soleil, including those of sexual violence.
- 10.5- With the assistance of the countries in the region, support law enforcement authorities to combat the smuggling and uncontrolled flow of illicit arms and ammunition, as these are some of the main enablers of gang violence.
- 10.6- With the support of the United Nations, strengthen and accelerate efforts to implement Haiti’s National Action Plan to implement the CARICOM Roadmap for the Implementation of the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition in the Caribbean by 2030.
- 10.7- Restore the establishment of social services and projects with the aim of allowing the population to become more self-reliant, and the displaced people of Cité Soleil to gradually return to their communities in the medium term. This will also gradually reinforce confidence in government services.



10.8- With the support of the United Nations and bilateral and multilateral donors, strengthen the availability, accessibility, and quality of medical and psychological care and social reintegration for survivors of violence, including gang-related sexual violence, particularly through increased and sustained funding and support to organizations that provide medical and psychological care to victims.

To humanitarian and development actors:

10.9- Continue efforts already underway to strengthen coordination mechanisms between national and international actors involved in the humanitarian response and the development sector to improve the impact of the assistance provided to victims of gang violence and to enable the population to become more self-reliant.

10.10- Continue efforts to bolster the capacity of service providers to strengthen the availability, accessibility, and quality of medical and psychosocial care facilities for survivors of sexual violence linked to gangs.

10.11- Continue efforts to strengthen coordination with humanitarian interventions and development programs for victims of sexual violence in gang-affected areas, with a view to providing holistic victim-centered responses encompassing medical and psychological support, legal and socio-economic services, and reintegration support.

To the international community:

10.12- Keep Haiti on the international agenda, immediately strengthen the capacity of the Haitian National Police with coordinated international support, and urgently consider the deployment of a time-limited support force under conditions consistent with human rights, as well as a comprehensive and precise action plan. This must be accompanied by a rapid and sustainable re-establishment of state institutions in gang-free zones, as well as a profound reform of the judicial and penitentiary system.

10.13- Continue to identify the political and economic actors involved in gang dynamics and effectively implement the sanctions already imposed.

10.14- Strengthen international cooperation to ensure increased border control to stop the illicit arms trade and trafficking.