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Haiti's Political and Economic Conditions: In Brief

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Summary

Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic; Haiti occupies the western third of the island. Since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, Haiti has struggled to overcome its centuries-long legacy of authoritarianism, extreme poverty, and underdevelopment. Although significant progress has been made in improving governance, democratic institutions remain weak. Poverty remains massive and deep, and economic disparity is wide. In proximity to the United States, and with a chronically unstable political environment and fragile economy, Haiti has been an ongoing policy issue for the United States. Many in the U.S. Congress view the stability of the nation with great concern and have evidenced a commitment to improving conditions there.

Haiti returned to constitutional order in February 2017, with the inauguration of President Jovenel Moïse, after almost a year without an elected president because of political gridlock and delayed elections. Hopes for a more functional and transparent government are tempered by the political newcomer's lack of experience and ongoing investigations into Moïse's possible involvement in money laundering and irregular loan arrangements, which the president denies. Widespread corruption has been an impediment to good governance and respect for human rights throughout much of Haiti's history. The Haitian Senate's Special Commission of Investigation released a report in November alleging embezzlement and fraud by current and former Haitian officials managing \$2 billion in loans from Venezuela's PetroCaribe discounted oil program. The commission accuses 15 former government officials, including two former prime ministers, and President Moïse's chief of staff of corruption and poor management.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Its poverty is massive and deep, exacerbated by chronic political instability and frequent natural disasters. Almost 60% of the country's 10 million people live in poverty, and almost a quarter of them live in extreme poverty. Haiti is still recovering from the devastating earthquake in 2010, as well as Hurricane Matthew, which hit the island in 2016. The latter worsened a process begun by a two-year drought, destroying Haiti's food supply and creating a humanitarian disaster. In addition, Haiti continues to struggle against a cholera epidemic inadvertently introduced by United Nations peacekeepers the same year as the earthquake. Nonetheless, according to the State Department, Haiti is transitioning from a postdisaster era to one of reconstruction and long-term development.

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was in Haiti to help restore order from 2004 until October 2017. The mission helped facilitate elections, combated gangs and drug trafficking with the Haitian National Police, and responded to natural disasters. MINUSTAH was criticized because of sexual abuse by some of its forces and scientific findings that its troops introduced cholera to the country. The U.N. maintains it has diplomatic immunity, but after years of international pressure said that it had a "moral responsibility" to the epidemic's victims. The U.N. announced a new \$400 million plan to fight cholera in Haiti, and its intention to support cholera victims; neither program has been fully funded or implemented. MINUSTAH has been succeeded by a smaller mission, the U.N. Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), which is to focus on rule of law, development of the Haitian National Police force, and human rights. The Haitian National Police now have primary responsibility for domestic security.

Haiti was a key foreign assistance priority for the Obama Administration in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the State Department, the main priorities for current U.S. policy regarding Haiti are to strengthen fragile democratic institutions and foster sustainable development. Other policy priorities include support for economic growth and poverty reduction, including through bilateral trade and investment to promote job creation; improved health care and food security; promoting respect for human rights; and strengthening the Haitian National

Police. The Trump Administration's proposed FY2018 budget of \$156 million for aid to Haiti was a 30% reduction from the FY2017 request. The Administration has also announced that Temporary Protected Status for Haitians is to be terminated as of July 22, 2019.

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Political Background¹

Haiti was without an elected president from February 2016 until February 2017. After the Haitian government failed to complete a cycle of elections, including a second round of presidential voting at the end of 2015, former President Michel Martelly ended his term without an elected successor. The legislature named Senate President Jocelerme Privert interim president, to ensure that second-round presidential elections took place in April 2016 and a new president was installed in May. Privert established a verification commission to investigate opposition-party charges of electoral fraud; the commission called for the first round of the presidential election to be reheld. Some international observers disagreed with the need to rehold the presidential election but acknowledged a potential political need to rehold the election due to public perceptions of its legitimacy.

Meanwhile, Privert's term expired on June 14, 2016, and the Haitian legislature repeatedly did not vote on extending his mandate or appointing another provisional president. Eventually, the provisional electoral council (CEP) scheduled new presidential elections and some legislative contests for October 9, 2016. That vote was delayed until November 20 when Hurricane Matthew devastated parts of Haiti on October 3-4. The elections were held, and on January 3, 2017, Haiti's electoral council declared political novice Jovenel Moïse the winner of the presidential elections.

Haiti inaugurated Jovenel Moïse as president on February 7, 2017, marking a return to constitutional order. Moïse, a political newcomer and member of the Bald Head Party (PHTK, former President Michel Martelly's [2011-2016] party), won the November 2016 elections with almost 56% of the vote. Voter turnout was 21%. Runoff elections for some parliamentary and local elections were completed on January 29, 2017. Although PHTK has the most seats of any party in the legislature, with 31 of 119 in the Chamber of Deputies and 11 of 30 in the Senate, no single party has a majority. PHTK may have to rely on alliances to enact legislation and fulfill its policy agenda. As a political newcomer, this might prove challenging for Moïse to sustain, but he has had some success so far.

Among the challenges the new president faces are ongoing recovery from the 2010 earthquake and 2016's Hurricane Matthew, a cholera epidemic, stalled economic growth, and a highly polarized political climate. Other obstacles Moïse faces during his five-year term include a weak mandate due to low voter turnout, and the possibility of social unrest due to continued poverty and lack of job opportunities. Moïse arrived under the shadow of an ongoing Haitian government investigation into his possible involvement in money laundering and irregular loan arrangements, which Moïse denies.

Haiti at a Glance

Population: 10.8 million (2016; World Bank)

Land area: 27,560 square kilometers (slightly smaller than Maryland; CIA)

GDP: \$8.0 billion (2016, current U.S. dollars; World Bank)

Per capita income: \$810 (2015, current U.S. dollars; World Bank)

Life expectancy: 63 (2015; World Bank)

Leadership: President Jovenel Moïse; Prime Minister Dr. Jack Guy Lafontant; Supreme Court Chief Justice Jules Cantave

Sources: World Bank; U.S. Department of State; Central Intelligence Agency

¹ For further background on Haiti, and information on relations with the United States, also see CRS Report R42559, *Haiti Under President Martelly: Current Conditions and Congressional Concerns*, by (name redacted), and CRS In Focus IF10440, *Haiti Declares Winner of Presidential Election After Delays*, by (name redacted).

In March, the Haitian Congress approved the president's choice for prime minister, Dr. Jack Guy Lafontant, and later that month it approved Lafontant's cabinet. The legislature then approved the policy agenda presented by Lafontant. Authorities announced they will initially focus on reviving the agricultural sector, rolling out a comprehensive national health care insurance system, bringing alternative energy to Haiti, and infrastructure repair. Other items on the policy agenda include redeveloping the capital, Port-au-Prince, including the presidential palace and other government buildings that were destroyed during the 2010 earthquake. The government took a step toward funding these objectives in May by ending government fuel subsidies, thereby increasing fuel prices by 20%, but freeing up resources for other programs.² In September 2017, the legislature approved the president's budget, which included several tax increases for revenue generation.

Figure 1. Map of Haiti



Source: Map Resources; adapted by CRS.

The public greeted these tax increases with violent street protests, however. Since May, workers have conducted strikes for higher wages, especially in the textile manufacturing sector. Street protests have become “a fixture of Mr. Moïse’s administration,” according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).³ National and local transportation unions held strikes in September and October, leading the president to withdraw certain transport-related tax increases he had proposed. In November, hundreds protested the remobilization of the army and government corruption.

² “In Brief: Haiti, Dominican Republic, St Kitts & Nevis, Guatemala,” *LatinNews*, May 15, 2017.

³ Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), “Country Report: Haiti,” generated November 15, 2017, p. 20.

The United Nations ended its 13-year-long United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in October 2017. A new, smaller mission, the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), succeeded it, and will focus on strengthening judicial institutions and protecting human rights. (See “Security: U.N. Missions, Haitian Police, and Revival of the Haitian Army” below.)

Economic Background⁴

Plagued by chronic political instability and frequent natural disasters, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and one of the poorest countries in the world. Haiti's poverty is massive and deep. Almost 60% of the population lives under the national poverty line of \$2.41 per day. More than 24% live under the national extreme poverty line of \$1.23 per day. In addition, Haiti continues to recover from the 2010 earthquake that devastated the capital of Port-au-Prince, whose original estimated economic damage was \$8 billion to \$14 billion.⁵ In October 2016, Hurricane Matthew, which the World Bank characterized as the most devastating disaster since the earthquake, caused damage estimated to equal 32% of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP). The agricultural, livestock, and fishing sectors suffered losses of about \$600 million. A two-year drought, compounded by Hurricane Matthew, has largely destroyed Haiti's food supply, creating a humanitarian disaster. More than 90% of Haiti's 10.4 million people are at risk from natural disasters.

Haiti has few resources to tackle these challenges. Internal revenues amount to about 13% of GDP, according to the World Bank. EIU indicated that tax collection in 2016 was down by 7% from the year before.⁶

Nonetheless, according to the State Department, Haiti has made the transition from a postdisaster era to one of reconstruction and long-term development.⁷ The EIU reports a 1.4% economic growth rate in 2015/2016, and forecasts another modest increase to 1.7% growth in 2017/2018. The EIU also states that greater economic growth will be inhibited by Haitian institutional weaknesses.⁸

Security: U.N. Missions, Haitian Police, and Revival of the Haitian Army

MINUSTAH, which was in Haiti for 13 years, was established to help restore and maintain order after the collapse of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government in 2004. On April 13, 2017, the U.N. Security Council voted to close MINUSTAH by October 15, 2017, reducing the mission over the subsequent six months. The U.N. had been reducing MINUSTAH's troops since 2012. As of April 30, 2017, MINUSTAH had a total of 5,063 personnel. Of those, 3,887 were uniformed personnel, consisting of 1,505 troops and 2,329 police officers. The mission included

⁴ Data in this section are from World Bank, “Haiti Overview,” October 2, 2017, at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview>, accessed November 22, 2017, unless stated otherwise.

⁵ Eduardo A. Cavallo, Andrew Powell, and Oscar Becerra, *Estimating the Direct Economic Damage of the Earthquake in Haiti*, Inter-American Development Bank, February 11, 2010.

⁶ EIU, “Country Report: Haiti,” generated July 19, 2017, p. 11.

⁷ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Haiti,” Fact Sheet, March 23, 2017.

⁸ EIU, “Country Report: Haiti,” generated July 19, 2017, p. 12.

1,087 civilian personnel and 89 volunteers. By October, MINUSTAH's military component was withdrawn, and police and civilian staff reduced—some of whom may transition to the successor mission.

The resolution ending MINUSTAH cited Haiti's peaceful completion of a long-delayed electoral process and return to constitutional order in February 2017 as a major milestone toward stabilization. The Security Council also commended the mission for supporting the political process, professionalizing the police, and maintaining a secure and stable environment in Haiti.⁹

Many Haitians and other observers criticized MINUSTAH for its role in introducing cholera to Haiti, and for allegations of sexual abuse by some of its forces. Prior to the 2010 earthquake, Haiti had no cases of cholera for at least a century. According to multiple scientific reports, MINUSTAH peacekeepers inadvertently introduced the disease in the country. Vulnerability to disasters—due to a lack of immunity, overcrowded living conditions, environmental degradation, poor construction standards, dysfunctional or insufficient sewage and sanitation systems, and political instability in Haiti—has facilitated the rapid spread of the disease, and the largest cholera outbreak in the world.

In August 2016, after years of criticism and demands that the U.N. take full responsibility for introducing the disease to Haiti, then-U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said that the U.N. had a “moral responsibility” to the epidemic's victims and announced a new program to support them, although the U.N. continues to claim diplomatic immunity. More than a year later, the U.N.'s \$400 million cholera plan is not fully funded, and advocates for cholera victims say that victims have not been consulted by the U.N. regarding compensation.¹⁰

Charges of sexual abuse by MINUSTAH personnel also fueled anti-MINUSTAH sentiment. The U.N. has a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual abuse and exploitation. The U.N. returns alleged perpetrators to their home country for punishment. The U.N. substantiated 35 of 82 alleged sexual abuse and exploitation cases among MINUSTAH personnel; seven cases are pending.¹¹

The U.N. Security Council provided for a smaller follow-on mission to succeed MINUSTAH, and to shift focus from stabilization to institutional strengthening and development. The U.N. Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) is to focus on rule of law, development of the Haitian National Police (HNP) force, and human rights, “to support the Government of Haiti in consolidating the stabilization gains and ensuring their sustainability.” MINUJUSTH is initially authorized from October 16, 2017, to April 15, 2018. It is to comprise up to seven “formed police units” deployed in five political departments (similar to states), plus 295 individual police officers.

With the support of MINUSTAH, and U.S. and other international assistance, the HNP became increasingly professionalized and have now taken on responsibility for domestic security. New police commissariats built in areas previously not served by police have given more Haitians access to security services. A police academy class graduating in 2017 is expected to bring the total police force to 14,500 officers. By next year the force is expected to meet its five-year development plan goal of 15,000 officers. Some observers remain concerned, however, that the Haitian police force remains below optimal size, and is underfunded. While acknowledging the

⁹ For further information, also see CRS In Focus IF10502, *Haiti: Cholera, the United Nations, and Hurricane Matthew*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

¹⁰ Jacqueline Charles, “On Eve of High-Level U.N. Haiti Visit, Trump Continues to Say ‘No’ to Cholera Request,” *Miami Herald*, November 2, 2017.

¹¹ Conduct in UN Field Missions, “Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,” accessed November 28, 2017, at <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-investigations>.

increased ability of the HNP, some observers also wonder whether the force will be able to maintain security and stability without the backup of international forces.

In what proved to be a very controversial move, former President Michel Martelly (2011-2016) began reviving the Haitian army, after a 22-year absence. The former army allegedly committed gross violations of human rights over decades, according to numerous reports by the State Department, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Amnesty International, and others. It also carried out numerous coups. After returning to office following one of those coups, former President Aristide disbanded the army in 1995. Martelly sent recruits to Ecuador for training. President Moïse has continued implementing Martelly's plan, and began recruitment for 500 additional soldiers in July 2017.¹² In November Moïse named a former army colonel, Jodel Lesage, as acting commander-in-chief; the Haitian senate needs to confirm his appointment.

The Haitian government says the army will be different this time, and will focus on patrolling the border with the Dominican Republic and combating smuggling, and will be employed in recovery efforts after natural disasters. Many members of the international community have said that Haiti should focus on strengthening its police force instead. For years, Congress has expressed concern over citizen security in Haiti. Congress has supported various U.N. missions in Haiti, and the professionalization and strengthening of the HNP and other elements of Haiti's judicial system in order to improve security conditions in Haiti.

Concerns over Haitians and People of Haitian Descent in the Dominican Republic

Relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which share the island of Hispaniola (see **Figure 1**), have been strained throughout their history. New tensions arose after a 2013 court ruling in the Dominican Republic stripped Dominicans of Haitian descent of their citizenship, applied retroactively to 1929, essentially rendering them stateless.

The Dominican government said it was trying to normalize a complicated immigration system. But U.N. and Organization of American States (OAS) agencies, foreign leaders, and human rights groups challenged the decision's legitimacy, concerned that it violates international human rights obligations to which the Dominican Republic is party. The IACHR concluded that the Constitutional Court's ruling "implies an arbitrary deprivation of nationality" and "has a discriminatory effect, given that it primarily impacts Dominicans of Haitian descent."¹³

The Dominican government established a "regularization of foreigners" plan in 2013. The plan required all foreigners, immigrants, and descendants of immigrants born between 1929 and 2007 to register, after which they could obtain temporary residence or possibly confirm their eligibility for naturalization. Out of almost 290,000 people who applied, about 240,000 qualified for legal status.¹⁴ After the June 2015 registration deadline passed, Dominican authorities were authorized to forcibly expel individuals of Haitian descent who lacked the new documentation. From July 2015 to September 17, 2017, according to the U.N. migration agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 58,271 people were officially deported, and 37,942 claimed to have been deported. Over 4,000 presumed unaccompanied and separated children crossed the

¹² Amelie Baron, "Haiti's Army Reborn 20 Years After It Was Demobilized," AFP, July 18, 2017.

¹³ Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "IACHR Wraps Up Visit to the Dominican Republic," press release, December 2013.

¹⁴ CRS In Focus IF10407, *Dominican Republic*, by (name redacted)

border into Haiti.¹⁵ A naturalization law revalidated Dominican citizenship for 55,000 people, and allowed them to register their children as citizens as well.¹⁶

The Dominican government says it will still help rectify the immigration status of people who missed registration deadlines. Nonetheless, thousands of people have difficulty obtaining documents demonstrating they were born in the Dominican Republic because for decades, Dominican officials have denied birth certificates and other documents to many Dominican-born people of, or perceived to be of, Haitian descent.

In May 2017 Haiti and the Dominican Republic revived the Joint Bilateral Commission to address security, border, and migration issues. The commission had become inactive while Haiti was dealing with its electoral problems over the last couple of years.

U.S. Relations with Haiti

According to the State Department, U.S. policy toward Haiti is “designed to foster the institutions and infrastructure necessary to achieve strong democratic foundations and meaningful poverty reduction through sustainable development.”¹⁷ Policy priorities include support for economic growth and poverty reduction, including through bilateral trade and investment to promote job creation; improved health care and food security; promoting respect for human rights; strengthening democratic institutions; and strengthening the HNP so that the country can provide its own security and work more effectively with U.S. agencies to combat international crime. Tensions between the two rose recently over the Trump Administration’s decision to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS; see “Immigration” section below) for about 60,000 Haitians as of July 2019.

U.S. Assistance¹⁸

Because Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere, and because of its proximity to the United States, Haiti has received high levels of U.S. assistance for many years. (See **Table 1** for U.S. aid to Haiti from FY2010, the year of the earthquake in Haiti, through the FY2018 request.) Recently, Haiti has been the second-largest recipient of U.S. aid in the region, after Colombia.

The Trump Administration’s request for FY2018 aid to Haiti totals \$157.5 million, almost a 30% reduction from the FY2017 request of \$218 million. Of the FY2018 request, \$85 million is requested for the State Department-administered part of the Global Health Programs account (GHP); \$16 million for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-administered part of the GHP; \$48 million for the new Economic Support and Development Fund; \$8 million for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE); and \$255,000 for International Military Education and Training (IMET).

¹⁵ IOM Haiti, “Border Monitoring Sitrep,” September 28, 2017.

¹⁶ CRS In Focus IF10407, *Dominican Republic*, by (name redacted).

¹⁷ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Haiti,” Fact Sheet, March 23, 2017.

¹⁸ Budget figures from U.S. Department of State, *FY2018 Congressional Budget Justification: Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs*.

Table I. U.S. Assistance to Haiti, FY2010-FY2018

(\$ in thousands)	FY2010 Actual			FY2012 Actual	FY2013 Actual	FY2014 Actual	FY2015 Actual	FY2016 Actual	FY2017 Request	FY2018 Request
	FY2010 Actual Base	FY2010 Actual Supp.	FY2011 Actual Base							
TOTAL	504,738	907,660	380,261	351,829	332,540	300,796	242,922	199,148	218,050	157,455
Economic Support Fund	160,750	760,000	131,000	148,281	135,985	119,477	100,000	—	79,882	N/A
NEW IN FY2014: Economic Support and Development Fund (<i>Pre FY2018 DA + ESF to compare</i>)	(160,750)	(760,000)	(131,000)	(148,281)	(135,985)	(119,477)	(110,000)	(65,245)	(79,882)	48,000
Foreign Military Financing	1,600	N/A	1,597	0	1,519	1,600	800	1,200	1,200	0
Global Health Programs—State	121,240	N/A	156,240	141,240	129,865	124,013	104,013	87,185	104,013	85,000
Global Health Programs—USAID	22,800	N/A	26,946	25,000	25,017	25,200	25,200	25,200	25,200	16,200
International Military Education and Training	92	N/A	220	224	208	241	272	246	255	255
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement	21,107	147,660	19,420	19,420	17,448	12,000	6,000	6,000	7,500	8,000
P.L. 480 Title II	177,149	N/A	44,838	17,664	22,498	18,265	6,637	5,668	0	0

Sources: U.S. Department of State, “Budget by Year-Haiti,” February 11, 2014 (FY2010-FY2011); Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ), Fiscal Year 2014, Foreign Operations, Annex: Regional Perspectives, p. 667 (FY2012); CBJ, Fiscal Year 2015, Foreign Operations, Annex: Regional Perspectives, p. 666 (FY2013); CBJ, Fiscal Year 2016, Foreign Operations, Appendix 3, p. 411 (FY2014); CBJ, Fiscal Year 2017, Foreign Operations, Appendix 3, p. 434 (FY2015, FY2017); CBJ, Fiscal Year 2018, Foreign Assistance Supplementary Tables, p. 91 (FY2016, FY2018; no figures for FY2017 are included).

Notes: “N/A” signifies not applicable; “—” signifies information not available.

The INCLE assistance (a \$0.5 million increase over the FY2017 request) is to provide support to the HNP, which has assumed responsibility for maintaining security after the MINUSTAH departed in October 2017. Part of the INCLE funding is also intended to support the U.N. police officers in the much smaller MINUJUSTH that succeeded MINUSTAH.

Counternarcotics¹⁹

Haiti is a transit point for cocaine from South America and marijuana from Jamaica headed to U.S. and other markets, according to the Department of State's 2017 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. Haiti does not produce a significant amount of illicit drugs for export. Although some cannabis is grown for local consumption, the country's subsistence-level economy means that most people cannot afford drugs, so domestic drug use is not widespread. Criminal gangs in Haiti are involved in international drug trafficking.

The Haitian government has committed to combating drug trafficking, and has taken steps to follow through on that pledge. It has increased staffing of the HNP and its counternarcotics unit (Bureau for the Fight Against Narcotics Trafficking; BLTS), leading to increased drug and cash seizures in 2016. Haiti's ability to interdict illicit drugs domestically improved slightly during 2016.

Nonetheless, Haitian capacity to interrupt drug trafficking remains low. Haiti's inadequate border control makes it susceptible to narcotics trafficking. The land border with the Dominican Republic is basically uncontrolled, and the underequipped Haitian Coast Guard has minimal ability to patrol Haiti's maritime borders: it has only five operational boats and 160 officers to monitor 1,100 miles of coastline and seven international ports. Furthermore, Haiti's judicial system remains extremely weak, limiting its ability to prosecute drug traffickers or money launderers.

In terms of money laundering and financial crimes, the State Department has classified Haiti as a major money laundering country, statutorily defined as one "whose financial institutions engage in currency transactions involving significant amounts of proceeds from international narcotics trafficking." The State Department notes, "[W]hile Haiti itself is not a major financial center, regional narcotics and money laundering enterprises utilize Haitian couriers.... A great majority of property confiscations to date have involved significant drug traffickers convicted in the United States."

A recent example of successful cooperation between the two countries' law enforcement forces was the extradition of former coup leader Guy Philippe to the United States in January 2017. HNP officers arrested Philippe and transferred custody to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Philippe, who led a coup that overthrew then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, admitted in a U.S. court in April that he accepted \$1.5 million to \$3.5 million from drug smugglers while he was police commander of a Haitian coastal city from 1999 to 2003.²⁰ Philippe was sentenced to nine years in prison in June.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, "Haiti," in *2017 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, pp. 176-180; and "Haiti" in *Volume II: Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*, March 2017, pp. 97-99.

²⁰ Marcos Martinez, "Former Haiti Rebel Gets 9 Years in Prison in US Drug Case," Associated Press, June 21, 2017.

Immigration

Haitians began migrating to the United States in larger numbers after the collapse of the 29-year Duvalier dictatorship in 1986. Recurrent political instability and violence, endemic poverty, and natural disasters have contributed to the continued flow of migrants from Haiti. About 5,000 Haitians lived in the United States in 1960. By 2016, the number was just over 668,000. A majority of Haitian immigrants (54%) came to the United States before 2000; 16% arrived during or after 2010. As of 2015, 57% of the Haitians residing in the United States were naturalized citizens. Haitians constitute less than 2% of the foreign-born population in the United States.²¹

Temporary Protected Status

Following the 2010 earthquake, the United States granted TPS for 18 months to Haitians living in the United States at the time of the disaster. TPS provides temporary lawful status to foreign nationals in the United States from countries experiencing armed conflict, natural disaster, or other extraordinary circumstances that prevent their safe return. Then-Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano extended TPS regularly, and expanded it to include eligible Haitians who arrived in the United States up to one year after the earthquake. On May 22, 2017, then-DHS Secretary John Kelly extended TPS for Haitians for an additional 6 months—rather than the usual 18 months—from July 2017 through January 2018, saying that TPS recipients should use that time to obtain the necessary papers and make arrangements to return to Haiti. He added that the Haitian government should prepare to receive “all current TPS recipients” and indicated that Haiti’s recovery progress “may not warrant further TPS extension past January 2018.”²² There are an estimated 58,557 Haitians with TPS living in the United States.²³

President Moïse responded in the press that “it is out of the question that they will be sending back 60,000 Haitians.”²⁴ On October 6, the Haitian government formally requested that the Trump Administration extend TPS for Haitians for another 18 months. On October 31, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson wrote acting DHS Secretary Elaine Duke that the conditions in Haiti that led to Haitians initially being granted TPS no longer justified their continuation in a protected status.²⁵ On November 20, 2017, DHS announced that TPS for Haitians would permanently terminate on July 22, 2019, giving Haitians with the status 18 months to return to Haiti or seek another legal status.

Some Members of Congress have expressed concern that the potential return of tens of thousands of Haitians, and the loss of remittances from Haitians working in the United States, could heighten instability in Haiti. Haitians sent \$2.4 billion in remittances to Haiti in 2016, constituting

²¹ Data in this paragraph are from Jennifer Schulz and Jeanne Batalova, “Haitian Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Information Source, August 2, 2017; and, for number of Haitians in United States, from U.S. Census Bureau, “2016 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates,” accessed November 28, 2017, at https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_B05006&prodType=table.

²² Department of Homeland Security, “Secretary Kelly’s Statement on the Limited Extension of Haiti’s Designation for Temporary Protected Status,” May 22, 2017.

²³ USCIS data as cited in CRS Report RS20844, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*, by (name redacted).

²⁴ Jacqueline Charles, “After Canceling with TPS Families, Haitian President Tells Recipients to ‘Calm Down,’” *Miami Herald*, June 17, 2017.

²⁵ “Tillerson: Central Americans, Haitians No Longer Need Protected Status,” *Washington Post*, November 3, 2017.

the equivalent of almost 25% of Haiti's GDP.²⁶ Another U.S. immigration program, the Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program (see below), states that allowing Haitians in the United States to work and send remittances to Haiti "supports broader U.S. goals for Haiti's long-term reconstruction and development...."²⁷ Other Members, and some business and labor organizations, have expressed concern that removal of tens of thousands of Haitians will be detrimental to local U.S. economies.

Members have introduced a range of bills related to TPS. Some would create a new protected status that would last for six years rather than rely on the DHS Secretary to redesignate it every 6-18 months, or provide a path to permanent residency for TPS holders. Others would limit the program, by transferring country designation authority from DHS to Congress, making unauthorized foreign nationals and members of criminal gangs ineligible, or making TPS holders subject to detention and expedited removal.²⁸

The Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program

Through the DHS's Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program, eligible U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents can apply for parole for family members residing in Haiti who have already been scheduled to receive U.S. entry visas within two years. The HFRP Program began in December 2014 to expedite family reunification and to support U.S. development and reconstruction goals in Haiti by allowing HFRP parolees to work in the United States and send remittances back to Haiti.²⁹ DHS warned Haitians against trying to enter the United States illegally, stating that only people living in Haiti would be eligible to participate in the reunification program.³⁰ Potential beneficiaries in Haiti cannot apply for themselves. The sponsoring family members in the United States, or "petitioner," must wait for the Department of State's National Visa Center to invite them to apply for the program.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS) within DHS anticipates conducting 5,000 HFRP program interviews per year. As of September 30, 2017, USCIS reported that of 9,758 applications accepted, it had denied 1,672, approved 6,864, and had 1,222 pending.³¹ Between March 2015 and June 2016, the State Department's National Visa Center issued 12,534 invitations to apply for HFRP covering 23,993 possible beneficiaries.

²⁶ World Bank data at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=HT>, and Manuel Orozco, Laura Porras, and Julia Yansura, *The Continued Growth of Family Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015*, Inter-American Dialogue, February 2016, p. 4.

²⁷ USCIS, "The Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program," October 23, 2017, accessed November 27, 2017, at <https://www.uscis.gov/HFRP>.

²⁸ For further background information on TPS, see CRS Report RS20844, *Temporary Protected Status: Overview and Current Issues*, by (name redacted)

²⁹ USCIS, "The Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program," October 23, 2017, accessed November 27, 2017, at <https://www.uscis.gov/HFRP>.

³⁰ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "DHS to Implement Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program," October 17, 2014; and Erick Eckholm, "Obama Administration to Expedite Reunification for Some Haitians," *New York Times*, October 17, 2014.

³¹ USCIS, "Number of I-131 Travel Document Applications for the Haitian Family Reunification Parole (HFRP) Program as of September 30, 2017," December 1, 2017.

Human Rights

According to the State Department's most recent Human Rights Report, Haiti's "most serious impediments to human rights involved weak democratic governance in the country worsened by the lack of an elected and functioning government; insufficient respect for the rule of law, exacerbated by a deficient judicial system; and chronic widespread corruption."³² The U.N. independent expert on Haiti has called on Haiti to continue investigations into alleged corruption and violations of human rights committed during the 1971-1986 dictatorship of the late Jean-Claude Duvalier.³³

While some observers hope that an elected government will pave the way for improved respect for human rights and improved governance, others note that the legislature is divided, and President Moïse came to office under investigation for corruption. Moïse reportedly fired the head of the country's anticorruption agency, the Financial Control and Intelligence Unit (UCREF), one year into the head's three-year term.³⁴

On November 10, the Haitian Senate's Special Commission of Investigation issued a 656-page report detailing alleged embezzlement and fraud by current and former Haitian officials managing \$2 billion in loans from Venezuela's PetroCaribe discounted oil program. The commission accuses 15 former government officials, including two former prime ministers, and the current president's chief of staff of corruption and poor management.³⁵

The U.N. independent expert also reportedly said that one of the top human rights priorities in Haiti is to eradicate illiteracy. Approximately one of every two Haitians age 15 and above is illiterate. The State Department cites other human rights problems, including "significant but isolated allegations" of unlawful killings by government officials; alleged use of force against suspects and protesters; severely overcrowded prisons with poor sanitation; lengthy detention without a trial; an unreliable judiciary; societal discrimination and violence against women; child abuse; and trafficking in persons. The U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women urged Haiti in 2016 to move quickly to adopt a draft law on violence against women.³⁶

Human Trafficking³⁷

Haiti is a "source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking," according to the State Department's *2017 Trafficking in Persons Report*. Most of Haiti's trafficking cases involve children in domestic servitude, known as "restaveks," from the French for "to stay with." Most frequently, poor families place children in such situations with an expectation that their children will be housed, fed, and educated. Instead, many are kept in slave-like conditions, are physically and sexually abused, and do not go to school. The State Department cites a joint Haitian government-international organization report

³² U.S. Department of State, "Haiti 2016 Human Rights Report," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016*, March 2017.

³³ Human Rights Watch, "Haiti," in *World Report 2017*.

³⁴ Samuel Maxime, "Haiti's Anti-Corruption Chief Abruptly Fired, 1 Year into 3-Year Term," *Haiti Sentinel*, July 9, 2017.

³⁵ José A. Iglesias, "Years of Unchecked Corruption Hamper Haiti's Development," *Miami Herald*, November 14, 2017; and "Exposing Corruption of Haitian Officials with Petrocaribe Fund," *Noticias Financieras*, November 14, 2017.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Haiti," in *World Report 2017*.

³⁷ U.S. Department of State, "Haiti," in *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2017, pp. 194-196.

that found that one in four children do not live with their biological parents, and about 286,000 children under age 15 work in domestic servitude.

The State Department classified Haiti as a Tier 2 Watch List country—meaning that the country's government does not fully comply with the minimum standards of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (Division A of P.L. 106-386) for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with those standards. Haiti made enough progress during 2016 to be upgraded from the lowest Tier 3 rating. The Haitian government provided a small amount of funding (\$140,000) to slightly increase trafficking prevention efforts. It increased antitrafficking law enforcement, resulting in its first three convictions for trafficking. The government is developing some programs to comply with a 2014 Haitian antitrafficking law, but has not yet implemented many of them.

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