

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 14, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

We write to express our deep concern about the human catastrophe unfolding in Haiti, and to appeal for the swift nomination of a U.S. ambassador for the country and the immediate deployment of a senior diplomatic representative to the U.S. Embassy in Port au Prince. The uncontrolled violence that is wreaking havoc in Haiti poses a direct and growing threat to U.S. national interests. The United States' top priority must be to address civilian suffering while supporting a Haitian solution to the crisis. Absent the presence of a U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, the deployment of a senior diplomatic representative would strengthen the United States' ability to plan for and mobilize an international response.

The violence in Haiti has spiraled out of control, with reports of serious and widespread abuses against the civilian population. Gangs are in control of more than half of the capital city, Port au Prince. They are executing, dismembering, and burning civilians, including women and children as young as one year old. A United Nations human rights report says that gangs are using sexual violence – including collective rapes in front of family members – to terrorize, punish, and subjugate local populations.

The violence has led to the systemic failure and near collapse of Haitian institutions. Soaring food prices limit Haitians' ability to buy, sell, or produce basic food staples. One out of every two Haitians (approximately 4.7 million people) is experiencing acute food insecurity. Schools are shuttered; children are starving, traumatized, and under-educated. Health care facilities are unable to care for the wounded or sick, including rising numbers of people affected by the resurgent cholera crisis. Despite recent success resecuring Haiti's main fuel terminal, the Haitian National Police remain outgunned and out-resourced by violent criminal gangs and their supporters. The growing likelihood of increased outmigration caused by political violence in Haiti would complicate broader U.S. government efforts to address the regional refugee crisis.

Your recent extension and redesignation of Haiti for Temporary Protected Status will provide critical protections for up to 100,000 Haitians who are already in the United States. We appreciate your efforts to mobilize new targeted sanctions and accountability measures in coordination with Canada and through the United Nations. We commend your administration's outreach to a range of political and civil society actors in Haiti to promote their inclusion in national political dialogues. We support your announcement regarding the deployment of a USAID Disaster Assessment Response Team (DART) to expand humanitarian efforts, and hope robust funding for international food assistance can be directed to the delivery of critical relief supplies.

However, more must be done. We must rectify the fact that it has been over a year since the United States has had an Ambassador or Special Envoy to Haiti. Given the rapid deterioration of security and humanitarian conditions, and the likelihood of bolstered U.S. assistance and engagement, your administration would benefit from the swift nomination of a new ambassador and the immediate deployment of a senior-level diplomat to Port au Prince.

We thank you for your administration's support for the Haitian people, and look forward to deepening our cooperation on this issue.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator