

# Haiti Advisory: 16 December 2019

## Summary

On 12 January 2020, Haiti will mark the ten-year anniversary of a devastating earthquake that killed an [estimated](#) three hundred thousand people. This occasion will likely attract the [attention](#) of the world's media, and follows an [extended period](#) of violent [civil unrest](#).

Demonstrations broke out in July 2018 in response to a sharp [increase](#) in fuel prices and lasted over a year, morphing into an ongoing opposition [movement](#) against President Jovenel Moise. Widespread discontent over [mass corruption](#), [poverty](#) and [inequality](#) mean protests are likely to [continue](#) until Moise [resigns](#).

HP Risk Management's (HPRM) personnel have been supporting journalists covering events in Haiti for more than a decade. This advisory assesses areas of unrest and safety considerations for deployed media workers in the build up to the anniversary.

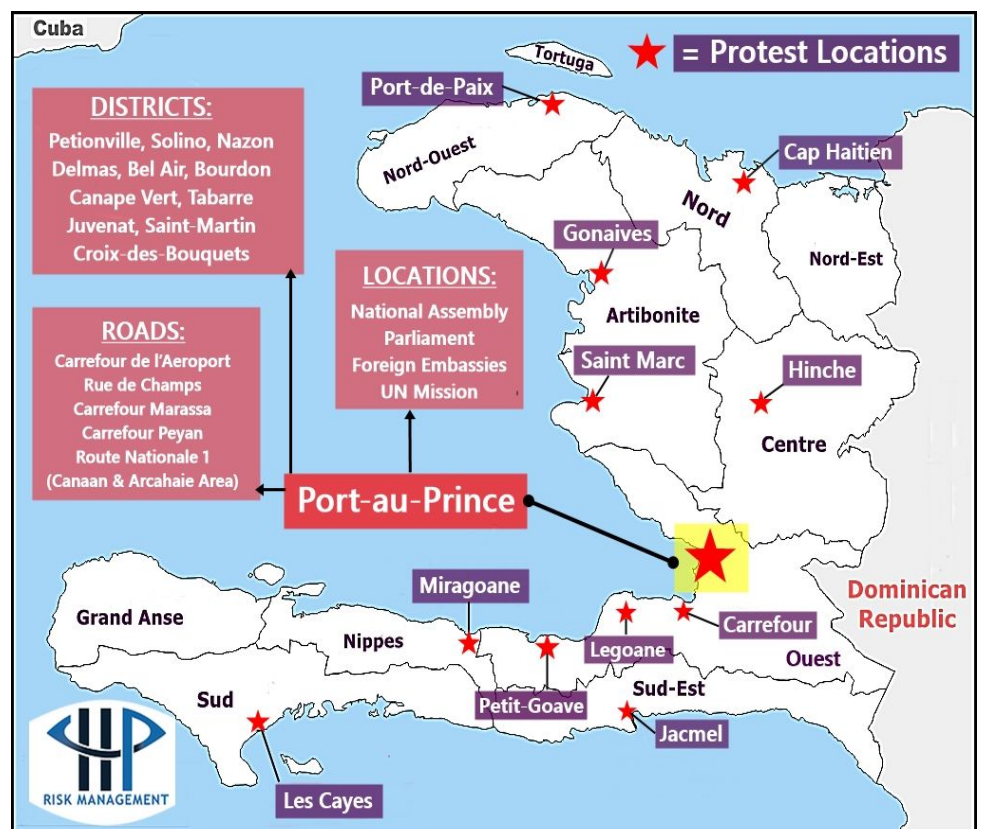
## Situation Assessment

Between September and November 2019, protests have seen at least [42 people](#) killed. Police have used [live fire](#) as well as [tear gas](#), [rubber bullets](#), [water canons](#) and [beatings](#) to quell demonstrations, and at least 19 deaths have been directly blamed on the authorities. Some Haitians [accuse America](#) for supporting the government, and there have been attacks on a number of [embassies](#).

Though the protests have lost some [momentum](#) this month, and some schools and businesses have [reopened](#), further unrest appears likely as the anniversary approaches.

Any breakdown or lack of progress in renewed attempts at [dialogue](#) between Moise and opposition parties could trigger repeat protests, and wider criminal threats will persist amid high levels of poverty and weak law and order. Rising commodity [prices](#), currency [devaluation](#), high [inflation](#), fuel [shortages](#) and regular power outages have all contributed to an [estimated](#) 3.67 million people requiring emergency food assistance.

[Roadblocks and barricades](#) manned by armed civilians or gangs are still being erected sporadically on an almost daily basis. [Gangs](#) vie for territory in poorer neighborhoods, engaging



in violent intimidation and extortion. [Criminal attacks](#), carjacking, [sexual assault](#) and [homophobic incidents](#) are a continued threat. In November, a visiting French couple [were killed by criminals](#) when transiting from Toussaint Louverture airport to their hotel.

The absence of a political agreement, Moïse's refusal to step down and the indefinite [postponement](#) of parliamentary elections earlier this year make an end to the unrest unlikely. The recent [conclusion](#) of the UN's 15-year peacekeeping mission could see instability worsen in 2020, and the earthquake anniversary in January could provide a symbolic moment for resurgence of public agitation.

## Media Landscape

Since the start of 2019, at least two journalists have been [killed](#) and eight [attacked and injured](#), including the cases of [Edmond Agénor Joseph](#) and [Chery Dieu-Nalio](#), both of whom were injured by gunshots. Gunmen also [attacked](#) the Télé Zénith and Télé Ginen radio stations in June 2019.

In terms of travelling around Haiti, security sources have told HPRM that:

- **Port-au-Prince** is still extremely volatile, despite a recent lull in protests.
- The roads leading to/from **Toussaint Louverture airport** are prone to robbery, with criminals aware of NGO workers who sometimes arrive with large sums of cash.
- The road north to **Saint Marc** is littered with checkpoints, which are often controlled by armed gangs. Such checkpoints can be dangerous for foreigners, less so to locals who know them.
- The road from Saint Marc to **Gonaïves** is perilous, with Gonaïves itself controlled by three gangs all inter-fighting for dominance.
- The road from the capital south to **Les Cayes** is almost as bad, with much of the **southern peninsula** a no-go zone for the authorities. Getting to **Carrefour** is usually possible subject to checking the latest security.
- The Grand Ravine gang issued threats against any government registered vehicles passing through the Martissant area in October.

Media workers should maintain a low profile and exercise caution when reporting. Some locals do not like being filmed or photographed and have become aggressive towards journalists who ignore their wishes.

## Safety Advice

- If possible, travel on a flight that arrives during the day time, and ensure you are met on arrival at Toussaint Louverture airport by a trusted contact.
- Plan all road travel in Haiti in advance via trusted and reliable contacts. Always check on the latest security before heading out of Port-au-Prince, and take a map with you. Have a robust check-in procedure and ensure you arrive at your destination before night.
- Many locals have resorted to using motorbikes due to their maneuverability. However motorcyclists are vulnerable. Choose an appropriate vehicle for the assignment, a decision that should be made based on the latest security situation. When in transit a sensible precaution is to have a motorbike outrider providing route clearance.
- Some hotels have closed and/or are currently operating at a reduced capacity, including The Best Western Premier hotel (which closed in October), The Marriott and The Karibe hotel. Always stay at a hotel with on site 24-hour security - these may be in short supply.

- [Fuel shortages](#) have been reported, so carry extra with you if heading outside of Port-au-Prince.
- Plan ahead regarding supplies of food and water, especially if travelling outside of Port-au-Prince. Consider taking emergency food provisions with you in case of continued shortages.
- Vehicle accidents can draw angry and potentially violent crowds very quickly. If a mob forms, proceed directly to a safe place (e.g. police station) to resolve the situation. Remaining at the scene could be a safety risk.
- Carrying a drone or satellite phone with you *could* result in detention. Security forces are likely to be suspicious after the [arrest](#) of US, Russian and Serbian nationals earlier this year.
- Avoid taking valuable equipment or large sums of cash with you when leaving your hotel, as extortion from local gangs at roadblocks and checkpoints is a risk.
- Only use trusted and reliable fixers who are well connected and informed about what is actually happening on the ground. Security or back watchers should be considered due to the fluid situation and potential for violence. You should ideally use somebody who speaks Haitian creole or French.
- If reporting during live protests, consider the necessity of PPE, such as a tear gas mask, ballistic goggles, bulletproof vest and safety helmet. Check the legality of any PPE with contacts in advance of travel.
- Access to functioning ATMs may be limited, so bring some USD cash with you..
- Haiti is a conservative country in which LGBTQ media workers may face hostility, highlighted by the recent [murder](#) of prominent activist Jeudy Charlot.
- Avoid going out at night. Areas prone to gang violence include Cite Soleil, Carrefour and Martissant, none of which are traditional tourist or business areas. Gangs are increasingly operating in more upmarket areas like Petionville.
- Some [medical facilities](#) have limited supplies and have been closed during protests. Ensure all relevant travel vaccinations are up-to-date and bring a well-stocked first aid kit with you.
- Check with your airline regarding their operating schedule, noting that Delta Airlines will [stop](#) flying to Port-au-Prince after 09 January 2020.
- The [land border](#) with Dominican Republic could potentially be closed if the security situation deteriorates, which should be factored into your evacuation plans

In addition to the above, a general safety guide to reporting from protest locations can be found via the [CPJ's website](#).

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HP Risk Management works with a number of newsrooms and journalist associations, providing on-call risk assessment support, safety advice and training. We continuously support journalists working in high risk and/or challenging environments worldwide, such as Haiti.

For more information please contact [info@hpriskmanagement.com](mailto:info@hpriskmanagement.com)

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