

La Saline Massacre: One Year Anniversary

One year ago today, on November 13, 2018, residents in La Saline, Port-au-Prince awoke without knowing the horrors that awaited them: [a 13 hour-long assault on their neighborhood by armed gangs with state-actor support](#). Over the past 12 months there has been little progress towards justice for victims. In a climate of impunity, attacks on civilians are intensifying in Haiti.

What happened that day?

[71 people executed](#), women and children amongst them.

[At least 11 women raped](#), some while their children watched.

[More than one hundred and fifty homes destroyed](#).

Several reports have suggested state involvement in the events in La Saline, including reports from Haiti's [National Human Rights Defense Network](#) (RNDDH), UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti (MINUSTH) and UN [Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights](#), and Haiti's [national directorate of judicial police](#). Witnesses saw assailants arriving in police vehicles, two senior state officials were allegedly involved in planning the killings, and several police units stationed within one mile of La Saline remained inactive throughout the hours-long massacre.

What justice has been rendered one year later?

One year on from the massacre, there has been little progress in bringing those responsible to justice. Survivors of the massacre remain in inhumane living situations, [vulnerable to continuing attacks](#).

Have survivors been provided adequate protection and recovery services? NO

Survivors of the killings, including [women, victims of sexual violence, and children displaced to surrounding neighborhoods, report having received no humanitarian assistance](#) from the government and are surviving in dire conditions, without access to [shelter, health services, food or education](#).

What efforts have been taken to protect victims and survivors?

Several Haitian law firms, including the BAI, jointly represent victims of La Saline in criminal proceedings initiated in Port-au-Prince court in December 2018, but the judicial system has made little progress in advancing the case. Proceedings are blocked [following the request for recusal of the presiding judge](#).

On the international level, IJDH and [BAI filed a Precautionary Measures request](#) in August 2019 with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, seeking an urgent response to protect the displaced survivors of the massacre.

In collaboration with other human rights groups including the [Bureau des Droits Humains en Haiti](#), BAI and IJDH also underlined the ongoing failures of accountability in La Saline during a [Thematic Hearing before the Commission](#), on September 23 2019. Following the Hearing, the Haitian state officials implicated in the massacre were [finally removed from their government positions](#) and [the Commission subsequently released a statement in October](#) expressing its concern about increased violence in the context of the political crisis. However, on the one-year anniversary of the massacre, it is clear that the requested Precautionary Measures remain desperately needed.

Has the Haitian Government responded effectively to ensure that residents of La Saline and those similarly situated are protected from future violence? NO

Perpetrators have not been held accountable:

- After a months long investigation, in May 2019 the [Haitian judicial police recommended the arrest of 70 people](#), including the senior state actors mentioned above. To date, neither has been arrested, while most of the other implicated perpetrators, including notorious gang leaders, remain free.
- Judicial processes in Haiti addressing La Saline appear blocked. In our experience, a decision on the application [to recuse the presiding judge](#) could take between 1 to 3 years, and the proceedings cannot proceed in the interim. The possibility of the appointment of a new judge also raises concerns around the protection of judicial independence in the case and would cause further delays, as much of the proceedings would need to be redone.

Assaults continue

- Civilians in [La Saline and surrounding neighborhoods continue to suffer brutal attacks](#).
- Gang attacks in the neighborhood of Tokyo in March 2019 forced [the closure of the area's only school](#). According to a November 8 report from the RNDDH, [at least 15 people were killed in the Bel-Air neighborhood between November 4th and 7th 2019 in politically backed gang attacks](#) intended to force residents of Bel-Air to remove protest barricades. The Bel Air massacre was reportedly perpetrated by the same gang leaders who carried out the killings in La Saline, clearly demonstrating the consequences of impunity.

Part of a larger pattern?

Considered alongside [increasingly repressive response by President Moise's Administration to the civic movement that is demanding his resignation](#), the failures of justice for La Saline victims sends a dangerous message about impunity. There is evidence of an increasing climate of violence in Haiti and of the direct implication, complicity or complacency of state actors in attacks against civilians.

- In April 2019, gangs opened fire on civilians in the Carrefour Feuilles neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, [killing at least 8 people](#).
- Between September 27 and October 24 at least 30 homes were burnt in Cap Haitien, in a conflict between local residents. [Local news reports implicated](#) President Moise's representative in the Department of the North, Pierrot Augustin, in orchestrating the violence.
- An October 31 Amnesty International report verified that [over the last month the Haitian police have been unlawfully using live ammunition against protestors and deploying indiscriminate and unlawful use of less lethal weapons \(tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets\)](#).
- On November 1 the [UN Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights stated they had verified that Haitian security forces had killed at least 19 people since September 15](#).
- At least two journalists covering corruption and the popular movement ([Néhémie Joseph](#), [Bernad Belle-Flour](#)) have been assassinated since the beginning October 2019, adding to the at least three shot after covering corruption issues [between June and September 2019](#).
- On November 7, thirteen women prisoners were [gang raped while held in civil prison](#) in Gonaives, during an apparent escape attempt by male prisoners held in the same facility.

On this anniversary of the La Saline massacre, we reiterate [our call for precautionary measures](#) that will protect survivors and provide services for healing. We remain committed to combating impunity and securing justice for victims of the massacre. We ask you to [join us](#) in calling attention to the ongoing failures of accountability in La Saline and its worrying links to the increasing violence of a political nature.