

Congressional Field Hearing on Haitian TPS Termination
January 20, 2025, Boston, MA
Remarks of Brian Concannon

Introduction

Good morning. *Bonjou tout moun*. My name is Brian Concannon. I am the Executive Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), and I have been asked to address the conditions on the ground in Haiti that deported TPS holders would face. I am grateful to Senator Markey and Representative Pressley for inviting me to this briefing, and for their years of leadership to promote respect for the rights of Haitians in Haiti and in the United States. I would like to add to Senator Markey's account of his 2016 trip to Haiti in the wake of Hurricane Matthew, that he returned with information that helped justify the renewal of Haitian TPS. The conditions in Haiti ten years ago were certainly dangerous enough to justify TPS. But I do not think that any of us back then could have imagined how much more perilous they would be today.

While I am grateful and honored to be invited to join this discussion, I am dismayed that we need to have anyone up here to explain that there are conditions in Haiti that prevent Haitians from returning there safely.

We all know that it is not safe for families to return to Haiti. Many of us here today are hearing frequent, desperate reports from family, friends and colleagues throughout Haiti who confront high risks of violence every time they go to school, to work, or to buy food. Gangs control 90% of Port-au-Prince, and large areas elsewhere. The country has the highest murder rate in the world and has the seventh highest Global Hunger Index score in the world. Many others tell us Haiti is unsafe too.

Members of Congress tell us that Haiti is unsafe. Last March, Senator Markey, Congresswoman Pressley, and Congressman Moulton wrote to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Noem to explain "the overwhelming evidence that Haiti remains an unsafe place for anyone to return to."

The US Federal Aviation Administration tells us that Haiti's main international airport has been closed to US flights since November 2024 due to danger from gang violence.

The US State Department website tell us in its travel warning for Haiti:

Do not travel to Haiti due to kidnapping, crime, terrorist activity, civil unrest, and limited health care.

After providing more details, the travel warning concludes:

Do not travel to Haiti for any reason.

Conflicting DHS Statements

DHS itself, in a Federal Register notice published on November 28, 2025, acknowledged that 1.3 million people – 12% of Haiti’s population – were internally displaced by gang violence.

The DHS notice quoted the October 22, 2025, statement from United States Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz that “we have gangs that are terrorizing communities, extorting families, recruiting children to commit horrors on behalf of the gang leaders. The spillover effects of this violence threaten not only Haiti but the stability of the wider Caribbean and the Western Hemisphere.”

Nevertheless, in the same November 28, 2025 Federal Register as this acknowledgement, DHS claimed that “*there are no extraordinary and temporary conditions in Haiti that prevent Haitian nationals from returning in safety,*” and announced the termination of TPS for Haiti.

Quantifying the Danger of Return

To illustrate how the conditions do, in fact, prevent Haitians from returning in safety, it is worth thinking about how many TPS recipients would be harmed, if, as DHS has ordered, all 350,000 of our Haitian neighbors with TPS were returned to Haiti and faced the average risk that people in Haiti are facing today. These are conservative assumptions, because people sent back to Haiti where they have no jobs or housing will likely face higher than average danger.

Haiti’s approximately 9000 homicides in 2025, would equal 263 deaths among the returned TPS holders.

The 1.4 million Haitians currently displaced by violence would equal 42,000 of TPS holders.

The 5.7 million Haitians facing acute food insecurity would equal 166,250 among returned TPS holders.

Another way of putting these statistics in context is to think about the 1.4 million people displaced by gang violence in Haiti in terms of city populations in Massachusetts. 1.4 million equals every resident of the City of Boston. Plus, every resident in Worcester, plus Springfield, Cambridge, Lowell, Brockton and New Bedford. Moreover, the 1.4 million figure was reported in December; it is likely that human rights reports expected this week or next will have higher totals.

Conditions Continue to Decline

Since the November 28 termination announcement, conditions in Haiti have continued to decline. More than half of all healthcare facilities in Port-au-Prince have closed, and only 13% of inpatient hospitals nationwide are fully operational. Haiti's General Hospital, the largest healthcare facility in the country, was closed by gang violence in March 2024. The hospital closure came to symbolize ever-expanding gang control, so the government made several efforts to re-open it, all of them unsuccessful. Last week the government gave up trying to reopen, and announced the hospital would be relocated.

Doctors Without Borders, which routinely works in war zones, closed its clinic in Bel Air on January 7, because of violence. The organization had closed its Turgeau trauma center in October 2025 after its ambulances were attacked by both gangs and police.

Haiti is facing a governance crisis in a little over two weeks, as the mandate of the Transitional Presidential Council expires on February 7. The Council, which was largely erected by the United States, was given two priorities: establishing security and running fair elections. The Council has done neither, nor is there any entity in place to lead Haiti after February 7.

Addressing DHS Justifications For Deporting Haitians Into Danger

The Federal Register notice provides two reasons why DHS contends that it is safe for Haitians to return despite the violence that threatens *"the stability of the wider Caribbean and the Western Hemisphere"*: a) *"the data surrounding internal relocation does indicate that parts of the country are suitable to return to;"* and b) *"[t]here have also been some other positive developments"* including the September 30, 2025 UN Security Council authorization of the Gang Suppression Force (GSF) to replace the Multinational Security Support mission (MSS).

a. "Safe Areas"

The data surrounding internal relocation includes 1.4 million people who are displaced, over 200,000 of them living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) sites, most of them in Port-au-Prince. IDP camps are mostly informal and makeshift. Conditions in the sites remain dire, with overcrowding, and inadequate access to food, drinking water, sanitation and health services. Violence, especially sexual assault and theft, is rampant. People living in IDP camps, about the same population as the city of Worcester, would not keep their families in such inhumane conditions if they had any safe alternative.

The 350,000 TPS holders, more than half the population of Boston, would face even worse conditions. Most would arrive without jobs or housing, or a social safety net of family and neighbors. Wherever they went, the returnees would impose an untenable burden on the overloaded systems that cannot provide healthcare, food, housing, jobs, or schools to the current residents.

Although some areas of Haiti are not completely controlled by gangs, there is not a municipality in the country that is free from gang violence. As many of us have found out from frantic and terrified calls from family and friends throughout Haiti, gangs keep launching attacks on areas that had been previously considered relatively safe. A notable example is the city of Mirebalais, where the UN and other international agencies had evacuated staff to from Port-au-Prince for safety. In March, Mirebalais quickly fell to gangs from Port-au-Prince that stormed the city.

b. The Gang Suppression Force (GSF)

The GSF has completed almost one quarter of its one-year mandate. There has been one announced deployment of additional troops, on December 8, that brought troop strength to 1,000. That strength is 200 *less than* the peak strength of the unsuccessful Multinational Security Support mission, and only 18% of the 5,500 troops planned for the GSF. Adding substantial forces at this time would require adding substantial financial support, but the mission's trust fund has only received \$113 million, which is 14% of the \$800 million needed to sustain its operations for the year.

Conclusion

Haiti is currently one of the most dangerous countries in the world and getting more dangerous by the day. Its people are already suffering from uncontrolled gang violence and malnutrition and face a looming political crisis on February 7. Uprooting 350,000 of our TPS recipient neighbors from their homes, their communities, their workplaces and their schools and sending them to Haiti where they are unlikely to find safe housing, employment, adequate food or healthcare will exacerbate the crisis in Haiti, and with statistical certainty will lead to murders, sexual assault, hunger and displacement for many of them.