

## ***U.N. Approves Kenya-Led Security Mission to Help Haiti Stamp Out Gangs***

Kenyan security forces are expected to head to Haiti for a year to combat gang violence that has killed thousands and forced many more people to flee widespread murders, kidnappings and extortion.



**By Frances Robles and Farnaz Fassihi**  
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The United Nations Security Council on Monday approved a yearlong multinational security mission for Haiti, led by Kenya, aimed at cracking down on rampant gang violence that has unraveled life for many on the Caribbean nation.

The 15-member Council voted to authorize a mission that would guard critical infrastructure such as airports, ports, schools, hospitals and key traffic intersections, and carry out “targeted operations” along with the Haitian National Police. Kenya has pledged at least 1,000 security personnel, and several other nations are expected to offer other resources.

Nearly 3,000 people were killed in Haiti from October last year until June, as gangs took over large patches of the country, particularly Port-au-Prince, the capital, according to the United Nations. Many neighborhoods have cleared out as people have fled widespread murders, kidnappings and extortion.

Gangs aligned with political parties have strengthened their grip on the country since the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. No municipal, legislative

or parliamentary elections have been held in years, creating a power vacuum. One goal of the Kenyan-led mission is to create the conditions for a safe election.

The Council voted 13 in favor of the resolution, with Russia and China abstaining.

Haiti's foreign minister, Jean Victor Génés, called the resolution a "glimmer of hope" for people who have been suffering too long. "This is more than a simple vote," he said. "This is, in fact, an expression of solidarity with a population in distress."

The resolution's passing signified an increasingly rare moment when the Council was able to act. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, divisions among the body's five permanent members, each with veto power, have impeded the Council from passing resolutions and taking actions.

Russia and China's abstentions suggested that neither country endorsed the resolution but they were not going to block it. Diplomats said that negotiations had been tense with the two countries for several weeks, with the text being rewritten multiple times, but that, ultimately, a consensus was reached.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vasily A. Nebenzya, said that although Russia did not have any objections "in principle," the resolution was "rushed" and "shortsighted."

The idea for the Security Council to authorize deploying a multinational force to Haiti was proposed by António Guterres, secretary general of the United Nations, in the aftermath of the breakdown of law and order in the country and gangs' taking over ports and fuel depots, the U.N. spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said on Monday.

Unlike a U.N. peacekeeping mission, where the blue-helmeted forces are under the control of the U.N. Department of Peace Operations, the multinational force in Haiti will be overseen by Kenya, although its forces are there with U.N. authorization, which gives the intervention the backing of international law.

It is unusual for the Security Council to authorize multinational or third-country forces to enter a conflict. In 2007, the Council authorized forces from the African Union to enter Somalia to help combat extremist terrorist groups.

As a technical matter, Kenya did not require the U.N. vote but had said it would not proceed without international backing.

"We have stepped up to create a new way for preserving global peace and security, answering the repeated calls of a member state facing a multidimensional crisis amid alarming spiraling gang violence," said Jeffrey DeLaurentis, a former U.S. ambassador who serves as the United States' senior adviser for Security Council affairs.

The Biden administration has pledged \$100 million to the mission and another 100 million dollars from the Defense Department in the form of intelligence, airlifts, communications and medical assistance.

About a dozen countries said they would join the mission, including Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda.

Haiti's prime minister, Ariel Henry, had urged the international community to take action a year ago. But human rights advocates who consider Mr. Henry's appointment illegitimate criticized the move to authorize an outside force as yet another measure by the international community to prop up a corrupt and unelected government.

"Historically, interventions haven't made things better, and historically made things worse," said Alexandra Filippova, a senior staff attorney at the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, a legal advocacy group.

Two leading Haitian American groups, the National Haitian American Elected Officials Network and the Family Action Network Movement, wrote to the Biden administration opposing the Kenya plan for Haiti, saying it will serve to "exacerbate its current political crisis to a catastrophic one."

Past U.N. missions to Haiti have ended in more misery: A yearslong peacekeeping force, authorized in 2004, brought cholera to the country more than a decade ago, killing more than 9,000 Haitians. Human rights groups said many U.N. soldiers fathered babies and abandoned them.

And at home, Kenya's security forces have been criticized for human rights abuses, as well as corruption, excessive force, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests.

Kenya's U.N. ambassador, Martin Kimani, told the Council that his country would collaborate closely with Haiti's allies and the other nations in the Caribbean. "We now invite member states to contribute as active participants, providing personnel, funds, vital equipment and logistical support to the multinational security support mission," Mr. Kimani said Monday.

U.S. officials said the current proposal, which was co-sponsored by the United States and Ecuador, calls for strong human rights protections, with an oversight mechanism to prevent abuses, especially sexual exploitation.

U.N. diplomats said that negotiations to pass the resolution started in late August, after Kenya came forward to lead the mission. It took weeks of intense talks to get China and Russia on board after they formed a unified front opposing two major parts of the resolution.

A key factor in getting Russia and China on board was Kenya's leadership of the force and an overall desire at the Council to be more responsive to African voices and demands, diplomats said. Russia and China both have strong economic, military and political ties to Africa. The support for the resolution from Caribbean countries added more momentum.

Russia and China wanted a six-month mandate instead of a year, which American, European and other members of the Council rejected, saying it would set up the enterprise for failure because it would not give the Kenyan forces enough time to turn things around, diplomats said.

The passing of the resolution at the Council is noteworthy given the deepening divisions among the permanent five members — the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia — since the war in Ukraine started. The Council has been unable to act to stop the aggression in Ukraine because of Russia's veto.

A U.N. diplomat said the timeline for Kenya to dispatch forces to Haiti was still unclear, but it would at least be several months away.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said that despite the recent struggles of the Security Council to take action, Monday's vote showed that "we can work together to achieve common goals."

When it comes to making sure the Kenyan-led force doesn't engage in abusive behavior, Ms. Thomas-Greenfield added: "The U.S. will engage on these issues very very aggressively. We have learned from the mistakes of the past."