

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As we approach the 220th Anniversary of Haitian Independence Day, we write to express our support for a secure and democratic Haiti. Hence, we have serious concerns over the United States' role in authorizing a Kenya-led Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission to Haiti. Another armed foreign intervention in Haiti will not result in the necessary Haitian-led transition to a democratic government, rather it risks further destabilizing the country, endangering more innocent people, and entrenching the current, illegitimate regime. We believe that a genuine commitment to supporting the Haitian people requires the United States to withdraw support from de facto Prime Minister Ariel Henry and encourage negotiations for a Haitian-led democratic political transition.

The United Nations Security Council's recent approval of a U.S.-drafted resolution supporting a Kenyan-led MSS to Haiti lacks a clear mission and strategy. Over a year ago, de facto Prime Minister Henry requested foreign support to address the then-gang-led blockade of fuel terminals and humanitarian aid.¹ However, Haitian authorities have already recovered the main fuel terminals and begun distributing supplies.² We are gravely concerned that an armed foreign intervention will only serve as a tool to buttress an illegitimate leader and undermine efforts by a representative transitional government to define the actual support desired from the international community.

Moreover, we are disturbed by the decision to deploy Kenyan security forces, who have a well-documented record of violating human rights. Earlier this year, the Kenyan security forces killed up to 23 people during demonstrations in Kenya, raising concerns with both the UN and Amnesty International Kenya around police brutality.³ The Kenya National Civil Society Center has opposed the deployment of Kenyan security forces to Haiti, accusing them of "extrajudicial killings."⁴ With the absence of clear objectives for this MSS mission, we strongly believe that funding this security operation in tandem with continued support for the de facto Haitian authorities is a misguided strategy that may have catastrophic repercussions for the Haitian people.

The message from Haitian civil society and Haitian-American diaspora leaders has been loud and clear – the U.S. should stop propping up the unconstitutional de facto government and support a democratic political transition.⁵ While the international community has seemed singularly focused on the issue of security, a broad swath of Haitian civil society, political, academic, labor, private sector, and religious leaders have come

¹ *Haiti's leader requests foreign armed forces to quell chaos*, AP, (October, 2022) <https://apnews.com/article/caribbean-united-nations-port-au-prince-haiti-antony-blinken-057bf6462ca2b00fe667e93b5289d319>

² *Key fuel depot in Haiti reopens for 1st time since September*, AP, (November, 2022) <https://apnews.com/article/business-caribbean-port-au-prince-haiti-e4b94cc01d1166185cc1a9607783e0b1>

³ *Kenya police to take on Haiti criminal gangs amid criticism of their human rights record*, CNN, (October, 2023) <https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/03/africa/kenya-multinational-force-haiti-intl/index.html>

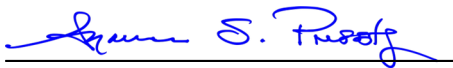
⁴ *ibid*

together to present a modest proposal for a real transitional government that will pave the way for a Haitian-led solution to this multifaceted crisis. Unfortunately, de facto Prime Minister Henry – buoyed by diplomatic support from the U.S. – has rejected these attempts and has only deepened his grip on power. The State Department should not override the will of the Haitian people – it is clear that a transitional government is the only viable path forward for Haiti to return to stability and democracy.

Lastly, to save the lives of Haitians and reduce violence on the island, the Administration must act swiftly to block arms shipments to Haiti and hold weapons traffickers and gang financiers accountable for their actions. There are no manufacturers of guns and ammunition in Haiti, rather the gangs rely on shipments from the United States to arm themselves.⁶ Countering this continued gun trafficking to Haiti is a critical step to the security and stability of the country. We urge you to work with the relevant government agencies, including the Department of Justice, to take the steps necessary to put a robust anti-arms trafficking to Haiti strategy in place.

We understand that Haiti’s problems are complex and the current everyday violence the Haitian people face is untenable. Our hearts break for the Haitian people and we stand with them in solidarity. Rather than hastily address this situation by supporting an armed foreign intervention – a strategy that has been tried and failed several times in Haiti – we urge you to take a holistic approach. This includes withdrawing support for military intervention and prioritizing a representative transitional government in Haiti.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



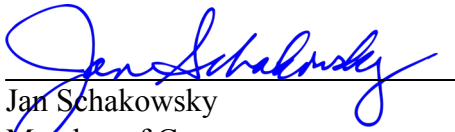
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

⁵ *Haitian-American leaders call on Biden to dump Ariel Henry*, THE HILL, (September, 2023) <https://thehill.com/latino/4222348-haitian-american-leaders-call-on-biden-to-dump-ariel-henry/#:~:text=A%20group%20of%20Haitian%2DAmerican,Ariel%20Henry%27s%20grip%20on%20power>

⁶ *UN report: Modern weapons being smuggled from Haiti to US*, AP, (March, 2023) <https://apnews.com/article/haiti-weapons-gangs-us-trafficking-f06bfb0a7d3b46a1e14ebd7bea95fd71#:~:text=The%20U.S%20Department%20of%20Homeland,50%20caliber%20sniper%20rifles%2C%20>


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress