

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

HAITI

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Research Directorate
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

3. POLITICAL PARTIES

4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS

5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

ENDNOTES

REFERENCES

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Official name

Republic of Haiti.

Geography

Haiti occupies the western one third of the island of Hispaniola, between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. The Dominican Republic occupies the remaining two thirds of the island. Haiti's total area is 27,750 km² (land: 27,560 km², water: 190 km²). Its climate is tropical, but the mountains and fresh sea winds mitigate the heat. The country's rainy season is from May to November.

Population and density

Population: 8,308,504 (July 2006 estimate)ⁱ

Density: 303 people per km² (mid-2004).

Principal cities and populations

Port-au-Prince (capital), 990,558 (mid-1999 estimate); Carrefour, 336,222 (mid-1999 estimate); Delmas, 284,079 (mid-1999 estimate).

Languages

The official languages of Haiti are French and Creole.

Religions

Roman Catholic (80%); Protestant (16%) (Baptist 10%, Pentecostal 4%, Adventist 1%, other 1%); other (3%). Approximately half of the population of Haiti practises voodoo, a fusion of beliefs originating in West Africa involving communication with the spirit-world through the medium of trance. In 2003, the Haitian government recognized voodoo as an official religion.

Ethnic groups

Black 95%, mulatto and white 5%.

Demographics (2006 estimate, unless otherwise indicated)

Population growth rate: 2.3%

Infant mortality rate: 71.65 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth: 53.23 years

Fertility rate: 4.94 children born/woman

Literacy: 52.9% of people aged 15 and older can read and write (2003 estimate)

Currency

Gourde (HTG).

35.069 HTG = 1.00 CAD¹

ⁱ This estimate takes into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS.

National holidays

2006: 1 January (Independence Day), 2 January (Heroes of Independence), 27 February (Shrove Monday, half-day), 28 February (Shrove Tuesday), 14 April (Good Friday and Pan-American Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 18 May (Flag Day), 22 May (National Sovereignty), 15 August (Assumption), 24 October (United Nations Day), 2 November (All Souls' Day, half-day), 18 November (Army Day and Commemoration of the Battle of Vertières) 5 December (Discovery Day), 25 December (Christmas Day).

2007: 1 January (Independence Day), 2 January (Heroes of Independence), 19 February (Shrove Monday, half-day), 20 February (Shrove Tuesday), 6 April (Good Friday), 16 April (Pan-American Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 18 May (Flag Day), 22 May (National Sovereignty), 15 August (Assumption), 24 October (United Nations Day), 2 November (All Souls' Day, half-day), 18 November (Army Day and Commemoration of the Battle of Vertières), 5 December (Discovery Day); 25 December (Christmas Day).

Head of state

President René Préval (since 14 May 2006).

Head of government

Prime Minister Jacques-Édouard Alexis (since 30 May 2006).

Form of government

The Haitian Constitution of 1987 established a republic in which the president is elected by popular vote and the prime minister is responsible to a legislature or parliament composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. The president negotiates and signs all treaties and presides over the Council of Ministers. Under the Constitution, the president selects a prime minister from the political party with the majority of seats in parliament, and the prime minister chooses a cabinet in consultation with the president.

Legislative structure

Under the Constitution approved by referendum in March 1987, the parliament (National Assembly) is bicameral and is composed of the Chamber of Deputies (99 members in 2006) and the Senate (30 members). Members of the senate and chamber of deputies are elected by universal suffrage. Deputies are elected to serve four-year terms, while senators serve six-year terms, with one third renewed every two years.

Administrative divisions

Haiti has 10 departments: Artibonite, Centre, Grand'Anse, Nippes, Nord, Nord-Est, Nord-Ouest, Ouest, Sud, Sud-Est.

Judicial system

The judiciary consists of a Supreme Court (*Cour de Cassation*), courts of appeal, courts of first instance, courts of peace, and special courts prescribed by law. Judges of the Supreme Court and courts of appeal are appointed by the president. Courts of appeal and

civil courts sit at Port-au-Prince and the three provincial capitals: Gonaïves, Cap-Haïtien and Port-de-Paix.

Elections

In Haiti, citizens aged 18 years and older have the right to vote through universal suffrage. The president is elected by direct voting for a five-year term and cannot serve consecutive terms.

The most recent presidential election was held on 7 February 2006. René Préval was elected president with 51.2% of the votes.

The most recent legislative elections (Senate and Chamber of Deputies) were held on 21 April 2006, and required a second round of voting, which was to be held on 19 March 2006 but was postponed until 21 April 2006 because of the number of claims of fraud that had to be investigated. Provisional results indicate that René Préval's Fwon Lespa party was successful, winning 13 seats in the Senate and 24 in the Chamber of Deputies. The next most successful party was the Merging of Haitian Social Democratic Parties (Fusion des sociaux démocrates haïtiens), which won 4 seats in the Senate and 18 in the Chamber of Deputies, then the Organization of the Struggling People (Organisation du peuple en lutte, OPL), which took 3 seats in the Senate and 11 in the Chamber of Deputies. The results in four electoral districts could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Defence

In 1994, when Haiti returned to civilian rule, parliament approved the separation of the armed forces from the police. The armed forces were effectively dissolved in 1995, but still exist under the constitution. In August 2005, the national police force numbered approximately 4,000 officers. Recruitment into the police force is voluntary for any person aged 18 years and older. In 2003, the security budget was approximately US\$23 million.

In June 2004, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) commenced operations in Haiti. With 6,700 military personnel and 1,622 civilian police, MINUSTAH was mandated to assist the interim administration in Haiti with preparations for elections in early 2006 and the disarmament and demobilization of armed militias. MINUSTAH's mandate was extended by eight months in January 2005. In January 2006, its peace-keeping force consisted of 7,519 military personnel and 1,776 civilian police. MINUSTAH remained in Haiti following the presidential and legislative elections in early 2006 in order to support national reconciliation and ensure that law and order was restored.

Media

Chapter II, section C, article 28, paragraph 1 of the Haitian Constitution of 1987 guarantees freedom of expression to journalists. That right can, however, be restricted in times of war.

The chief news agencies in Haiti are the Agence haïtienne de presse (AHP) and AlterPresse. The National Telecommunications Council (Conseil national des telecommunications, CONATEL) is the government communications licensing authority. *L'Union*, *Le Nouvelliste* and *Le Matin*, published in French, are the main daily newspapers in Haiti. *Le Matin* and *Le Nouvelliste* are independent newspapers. *Le Moniteur* is the country's official gazette, published twice weekly with a circulation of 2,000. *Le Septentrion* is a weekly newspaper published in French with a circulation of 2,000. Before President Aristide was ousted, Haiti had approximately 40 radio stations. *Télé Haïti*, a private commercial company, broadcasts over 13 channels in French, Spanish and English. The government-owned *Télévision nationale d'Haïti* offers four channels in Creole, French and Spanish. In 2003, the number of television sets in the country was estimated at 52,000 and the number of Internet users at 100,000.

United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Rankⁱⁱ

Value: 0.482/1 (2004)

Rank: 154 out of 177 countries (2004)

United Nations Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Country Rankⁱⁱⁱ

Information not available in the sources consulted

Population below the national poverty line

80% (2003 estimate)

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)^{iv}

Score: 1.8 out of 10 (2006)

Rank: 163 out of 163 countries (2006)

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)^v

Information not available in the sources consulted.

[Information compiled from:, *The Europa World Year Book 2006 2006; Haiti 1987; Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006 2006; Political Parties of the World 2005; Transparency International (TI) 6 Nov. 2006; United Nations (UN) 2006; United States (US) 2 Nov. 2006]*

ⁱⁱ The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low development index). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value.

ⁱⁱⁱ The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women.

^{iv} The Transparency International CPI is based on composite survey data from 16 polls and 10 independent institutions. The data reflects the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (163).

^v The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state.

2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The presidential and legislative elections took place in 2006, held over from November 2005 owing to poor administrative preparations and to the unstable security situation.² Although the presidential election unfolded with little of the much-feared violence, initial reports of the results suggested that René Prével had won³. Later it was revealed that he had received only 49%, requiring a second round of voting⁴. This provoked clashes between Prével supporters and UN troops.⁵ Prével supporters contested the results mainly because thousands of burned ballot papers were discovered in a dump near Port-au-Prince.⁶ One person was killed and many others were wounded in the violent protests⁷. However, after negotiations between the interim government and electoral officials, René Prével was declared victorious with 51.2% of the vote.⁸ Following the proclamation of René Prével's victory, former Haitian president Aristide announced his intention to return to Haiti as soon as possible, but stated that he would not return to the political arena.⁹ International observers, however, were sceptical about Aristide's good faith and suggested that his return could further destabilize the country.¹⁰

The legislative elections required two rounds of voting (7 February 2006 and 21 April 2006).¹¹ The Interim Electoral Council (Conseil électoral provisoire, CEP) postponed the second round of voting because of claims of irregularities from the first round.¹²

3. POLITICAL PARTIES^{vi}

Front for Hope (Front de l'espoir, Fwon Lespwa): The Front for Hope was founded in 2005 to support the candidacy of René Prével in the 2006 presidential election.¹³ This is a party of alliances that include the Effort and Solidarity to Build a National and Popular Alternative (Effort de solidarité pour la construction d'une alternative nationale et populaire, ESCANP);¹⁴ the Open the Gate Party (Pati Louvri Baryè, PLB);¹⁵ and grass-roots organizations, such as Grand-Anse Resistance Committee (Comité de résistance de Grand-Anse), the Central Plateau Peasants' Group (Mouvement paysan du plateau Central) and the Southeast Kombit Movement (Mouvement Kombit du Sud-Est or Kombit Sudest).¹⁶ The Front for Hope is headed by René Prével,¹⁷ the current head of state, elected in 2006.¹⁸ In the 2006 legislative elections, the party won 13 of the 30 seats in the Senate and 24 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁹

Merging of Haitian Social Democratic Parties (Parti Fusion des sociaux-démocrates haïtiens, PFSDH): This party was created on 23 April 2005 with the fusion of the following three democratic parties: Ayiti Capable (Ayiti kapab), the National Congress of Democratic Movements (Congrès national des mouvements démocratiques, KONAKOM), and the Haitian National Revolutionary Party (Parti national progressiste

^{vi} The results of the 2006 elections are almost complete, except for 4 districts where they were unavailable. More complete results could not be found either on the Haitian Provisional Electoral Commission Web site or among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

révolutionnaire, PANPRA).²⁰ The PFSDH is headed by Serge Gilles.²¹ In 2006, the party won 4 of the 30 seats in the Senate and 18 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.²²

Organization of the Struggling People (Organisation du peuple en lutte, OPL): This party emerged in 1996 as an offshoot of the pro-Aristide Lavalas Political Organization (Organisation politique Lavas, OPL), founded in 1991.²³ The party opposes Aristide²⁴ and is currently led by Paul Denis.²⁵ In the 2006 legislative elections, the OPL won 3 of the 30 seats in the Senate and 11 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.²⁶

National Christian Union for the Reconstruction of Haiti (Union nationale chrétienne pour la reconstruction d’Haïti, UNCRH): The current UNCRH leader is Jean Chavannes Jeune.²⁷ This party challenged the results of the 2006 elections²⁸ in which they won 2 of the 30 seats in the Senate and 12 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.²⁹

Democratic Alliance (Alyans): This party is a coalition of the Confederation of Democratic Unity (Kovansyon Inite Dèmokratik, KID)³⁰ and the Popular Party for the Renewal of Haiti (Parti populaire pour le renouveau d’Haïti, PPRH).³¹ Its current leader is Evans Paul.³² The Democratic Alliance challenged the results of the 2006 elections³³ in which they won 1 seat out of the 30 seats in the Senate and 10 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.³⁴

Artibonite in Action (Latibonit an Aksyon, LAAA): This party is headed by Youri Latortue.³⁵ In the 2006 legislative elections, it won 2 of the 30 seats in the Senate and 5 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.³⁶ This party also challenged the results of the 2006 elections.³⁷

Christian Movement for a New Haiti (Mouvement chrétien pour une nouvelle Haïti, MOCHRENA): Also known as the Christian National Movement (Mouvement chrétien national),³⁸ this is a centre-right party founded in 1991 by evangelical churches.³⁹ Luc Mésadiou and Gilbert N. Léger share the leadership of the party.⁴⁰ In the 2006 legislative elections, it won 3 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁴¹

The Lavalas Family (La Fanmi Lavalas, FL): This party was founded in November 1996 by former president Aristide.⁴² It is pro-Aristide and centrist.⁴³ The FL emerged when the Lavalas Political Organization (Organisation politique Lavalas, OPL) split into two rival factions, the Lavalas Family and the Organization of Struggling People, following strong opposition to the economic reforms proposed by René Préval, who was the president of Haiti at the time.⁴⁴ Leadership of the party is currently shared by former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in exile, and former prime minister Yvon Neptune.⁴⁵ Despite Aristide’s absence, this party plays a key role in Haiti’s political scene.⁴⁶ It won 2 of the 30 seats in the Senate and 1 seat out of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2006 legislative elections.⁴⁷

Assembly of Progressive National Democrats (Rassemblement des démocrates nationalistes et progressistes, RDNP): The RDNP was created in 1979⁴⁸ and is a

Christian democratic party.⁴⁹ Leslie Manigat is the party's secretary-general.⁵⁰ The RDNP won 1 seat out of the 30 seats in the Senate and 1 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2006 legislative elections.⁵¹

National Reconstruction Front (Front de reconstruction nationale, FRN): The FRN was established in February 2004 by a group of former rebels led by Guy Philippe.⁵² Its leader is Buteur Metayer, and its secretary-general is Guy Philippe.⁵³ In the 2006 legislative elections, it won 1 seat out of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁵⁴

Movement for National Reconstruction (Mouvement pour la reconstruction nationale, MRN): The MRN was founded in 1991 by René Théodore, who was the leader of the Unified Party of Haitian Communists (Parti unifié des communistes haïtiens, PUCH) at that time.⁵⁵ It is currently headed by Jean-Enol Buteau.⁵⁶ It won 1 seat out of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁵⁷

Mobilization for Haiti's Development (Mobilisation pour le progrès d'Haïti, MPH): The MPH is led by Samir Mourra.⁵⁸ It won 3 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2006 legislative elections.⁵⁹

Cooperative Action to Build Haiti (Action coopérative pour construire Haïti, KONBA): This party is headed by Jean-Baptiste Chavannes.⁶⁰ It won 2 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁶¹ The party also challenged the results of the 2006 elections.⁶²

Haitian Democratic and Reform Movement (Mouvement démocratique et rénovateur d'Haïti, MODEREH): The MODEREH is headed by Dany Toussaint and Prince Pierre Sonson.⁶³ It won 1 seat in the Chamber of Deputies.⁶⁴

Independent Movement for National Reconciliation (Mouvement indépendant pour la réconciliation nationale, MIRN): The MIRN is led by Luc Fleurinord.⁶⁵ It won 1 seat out of the 30 seats in the Senate and 1 of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁶⁶ This party challenged the results of the 2006 elections.⁶⁷

Democratic Action to Build Haiti (Action démocratique pour bâtir Haïti, ADHEBA): This party was founded in 2004.⁶⁸ Led by Camille Leblanc,⁶⁹ it won 1 seat out of the 99 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2006 legislative elections.⁷⁰

Pont: The leader of this party is Jean-Marie Cherestal.⁷¹ It won 1 out of the 30 seats in the Senate⁷² and challenged the results of the 2006 elections.⁷³

Other parties

Other political parties in Haiti include the Alliance for the Liberation and Advancement of Haiti (Alliance pour la libération et l'avancement d'Haïti, ALAH),⁷⁴ the Alternative for Change (L'alternative pour le changement, AC),⁷⁵ the CREDO,⁷⁶ the Haitian Democratic Party (Parti démocratique d'Haïti, PADEMH), the Haitian National Popular Party (Parti populaire national haïtien, PPNH),⁷⁷ the Konbit National Movement (Mouvman Konbit Nasyonal, MKN),⁷⁸ the National Patriotic Movement (Mouvement

national patriotique, MNP),⁷⁹ the National Progressive Democratic Party of Haiti (Parti national démocratique progressiste d'Haïti (PNDPH),⁸⁰ the National Unity Movement (Mouvement d'unité nationale),⁸¹ the National Workers' Party (Parti National des Travailleurs, PNT),⁸² the Organization for Democracy in Haiti (Organisation pour la démocratie en Haïti, OPDH),⁸³ the Papaye Peasants Movement (Mouvement paysan de Papaye, MPP),⁸⁴ the Popular Star,⁸⁵ the Rally of Christian Democrats (Rassemblement des démocrates chrétiens),⁸⁶ the Union for National Reconstruction (Union pour la reconstruction nationale),⁸⁷ and the Union of Democratic Patriots (Union des patriotes démocratiques).⁸⁸

4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS

Information not available in the sources consulted

5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

On 15 August 2006, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1702, which extended the MINUSTAH mandate in Haiti until 15 February 2007⁸⁹ and assigned the mission new tasks, particularly in assisting the government and in disarmament.⁹⁰ The resolution was adopted as a result of a report from the United Nations Secretary-General, which described the unstable conditions in Haiti, despite successful national elections.⁹¹ The report, published on 28 July 2006, listed the following challenges for Haiti: combating crime in the capital, stopping illegal trafficking in weapons and in drugs, fighting impunity and corruption, improving government operations, and reducing poverty.⁹² It would be interesting to assess the situation in Haiti after MINUSTAH's mandate has expired (11 February 2007).

¹ International Currency Converter. 15 Nov. 2006.

² *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 2057.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 2065.

¹⁴ *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* 2006, 488.

¹⁵ Ibid., 487

¹⁶ US 2 Nov. 2006, 5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 2064.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2064-2065.

²⁰ Pati Fizyon Sosyal Demokrat Ayisyen 2 May 2005.

²¹ Ibid.

²² *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 2064-2065.

²³ *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* 2006, 486-487.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 487.

²⁵ *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 2065.

²⁶ Ibid., 2064-2065.

- 27 Ibid., 2066.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., 2064-2065.
- 30 Ibid., 2065.
- 31 *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 2065.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., 2064-2065
- 37 Ibid., 2065.
- 38 *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 278.
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- 43 *Political Parties of the World 2005*, 279.
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- 48 Ibid., 2066.
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- 74 *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* 2006, 488.
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- 80 *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 2065.
- 81 *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006* 2006, 488.

- ⁸² Ibid.
⁸³ Ibid.
⁸⁴ Ibid.
⁸⁵ Ibid.
⁸⁶ Ibid.
⁸⁷ Ibid.
⁸⁸ Ibid.
⁸⁹ UN 15 Aug. 2006b, 3.
⁹⁰ Ibid. 15 Aug. 2006a.
⁹¹ Ibid.
⁹² Ibid. 28 July 2006, 18.

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