



Illegal Weapons Trafficking to Haiti

The people of Haiti are suffering from the convergence of poor governance, food insecurity, mass displacement, and criminal gangs who perpetrate massacres, kidnapping, sexual violence, and child trafficking — sustained by a flood of illegally trafficked weapons from the United States.

500K

Illegal guns
circulating in Haiti

8,100

People killed by
gangs in 2025

90%

Of Port-au-Prince
under gang control

1.5M

People internally
displaced by violence

The Situation

Between January 2022 and December 2025, **29,285** people were killed or injured by gang violence in Haiti — at least **811** of them children. In 2025 alone, criminal gangs killed 8,100 people.

Twenty-six criminal gangs now control approximately **90%** of Port-au-Prince, as well as large sections of the Artibonite and Center Departments and much of the country's critical infrastructure — roads, ports, and airports.

Gang violence has driven 1.5 million people from their homes. Most have fled to the provinces; roughly 15% live in makeshift tent camps in the capital, where women, girls, and boys face a constant threat of sexual assault.

All 26 gangs engage in child trafficking — recruiting young boys to commit crimes and young girls for sexual violence. About half of all gang members are children.

~50%

of gang members
in Haiti are children

From January 2022 to December 2025, gangs carried out **5,454** documented kidnappings, including **220** children. Victims face assault during abductions, during neighborhood attacks, and even on public transport.

DISPLACEMENT & HUNGER

About 35% of Haitians live in extreme poverty. Half the country — **5.8 million people** — faces acute food insecurity, in part because gangs control the roads between communities and markets.

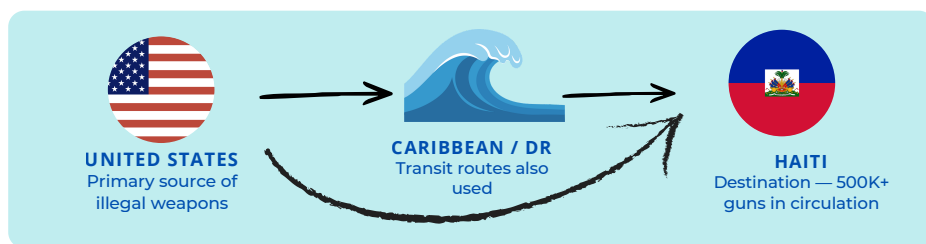
EDUCATION CRISIS

In 2025, insecurity forced more than **1,600 schools** to close across Haiti, leaving **243,000 children** without access to education. Haiti is at risk of losing an entire generation.

Illegal Weapons Trafficking

⚠️ UN ARMS EMBARGO IN EFFECT — WIDELY VIOLATED

Approximately **500,000 guns**, along with ammunition, are currently circulating in Haiti. Haiti does not manufacture weapons or ammunition. The vast majority of these arms have been trafficked illegally — primarily from the United States.



ENFORCEMENT GAP

While other Caribbean nations serve as transit points, arms trafficked through the Dominican Republic and other regional countries are also believed to have originated in the United States. The pipeline is clear — the political will to shut it down has been insufficient.

Both US law and United Nations resolutions prohibit the sale of weapons to Haiti. However, weak enforcement in the United States has allowed illegal trafficking to continue largely unchecked. Access to high-caliber weapons directly fuels the gangs' capacity for violence, territorial control, and fear.

Legislative Solutions

Three pieces of pending legislation would meaningfully reduce the flow of illegal weapons to Haiti and other affected nations. Together they address oversight, tracing, sales restrictions, and criminal penalties.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

The ARMAS Act

- Improves congressional oversight and mandates an interagency strategy to disrupt arms trafficking
- Expands tracing of captured arms to strengthen enforcement
- Transfers small arms authority to the State Department
- Prohibits the Commerce Department from promoting small arms sales globally

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Stop Arming Cartels Act

- Prohibits future sales of nongovernmental .50 caliber rifles
- Regulates .50 caliber rifles currently in circulation
- Requires firearms dealers to report multiple rifle sales to a single buyer to law enforcement

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Assault Weapons Ban

- Makes it a federal crime to knowingly import, sell, manufacture, transfer, or possess a semiautomatic assault weapon
- Directly reduces the supply of high-caliber weapons available for trafficking

SOURCES

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3. Daniel Dickinson, "Haiti Is Under a UN Arms Embargo: So Why Are 500,000 Illegal Weapons in Circulation?", *UN in Haiti*, October 17, 2025. haiti.un.org
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