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Haiti: Journey to the heart of the anti-Ariel Henry mobilization, part 1

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In the capital, it's at the crossroads of the airport, under the viaduct or Nazon crossroads that one also calls Kafou rezistans, that the protesters meet.

Part 1

The Head of the Transition, Ariel Henry, is in Guyana for the 46th Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), taking place from February 25 to 28, 2024. Then, according to a Primature press release, he was due to travel to Nairobi, Kenya, to sign the agreement authorizing that country and a number of other African states to deploy in Haiti as part of the

Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti (MMSS). For him, everything is under control. Under control! Not so sure. Indeed, given what happened on Monday, February 5, Tuesday, February 6, and Wednesday February 7, 2024, in Haiti, notably in Hinche, Cap-Haïtien, Ouanaminthe, Miragoâne, Jérémie, Gonaïves, Cayes, Petit-Goâve, Mirebalais, not to mention Port-au-Prince and Pétion-Ville, it's indisputable that the authorities are not really in control of the country.

Ariel Henry can always argue that he did not leave power on February 7, as requested by the opposition and a large part of the population. Nevertheless, the evidence is there: he no longer has authority over anyone, perhaps only over his police force, who kill for him and brutalize street children. As we all know, for several weeks now, a Communiqué published in the official newspaper *Le Moniteur* on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, has outlawed the structure known as BSAP (Brigade de Sécurité des Aires Protégées - Protected Areas Security Brigade), which is the armed wing of ANAP (Agence Nationale des Aires Protégées - National Protected Areas Agency). an autonomous public body of the Ministry of the Environment. The communiqué ordered BSAP agents not only to lay down their arms but also to remain confined to their bases or barracks until further notice. However, as we have already written, since the dismissal of ANAP Director General Jeantel Joseph, head of BSAP, it is as if the interim regime had activated a new front against its presence at the head of the country.



BSAP agents

Indeed, after former rebel leader Guy Philippe, freshly expelled from the United States where he served a six-year prison sentence for drug trafficking, launched a general uprising against the government, preceded by calls from the opposition for the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, it is now the agents of the Protected Areas Security Brigade who are getting in on the act in response to the population's call to overthrow the regime, whatever the cost.

In fact, the country has been turned upside down for over a month now. Not a single major Haitian city has been spared by the protest movement, whose objective is the departure of Ariel Henry, who holds the posts of head of government, Minister of the Interior, President of the Republic, President of the CSPN, etc. But in this situation of revolt, the people are not alone. But in this situation of revolt, some regions are more affected than others. The Grand Sud and Grand Nord are the hard core of the protest.

The town of Jérémie, a stronghold of Guy Philippe's supporters, where several

journalists, including Wadson Pierre Richard, Wilborde Ymozan, Lemy Brutus, Stanley Belford, Samuel Auguste and Schneider Paulson, were victims of police brutality.

The inhabitants of the Cité d'Alexandre Dumas have paid a very heavy price since the beginning of this protest. The town of Les Cayes, where the former police commissioner has a large number of supporters, has also been on the barricades for over a month. On February 7, 2024, supporters of EDE and the Pitit Dessalines platform took to the streets of the town with placards demanding the Prime Minister's departure. A young demonstrator was stabbed to death during the demonstration, and the UDMO made excessive use of tear gas. The previous day, several people had been shot and wounded by UDMO officers. It should be remembered that it was in this town that political activist Myrthil Marcelin, known as Arab, was arrested on February 12, 2024, by security agents of the Department Delegate.



Demonstration in Jérémie.

These two metropolises - Jérémie and Les Cayes - have continued to fuel the movement initiated by Guy Philippe since his return to the country. But there's also the department of Nippes, more specifically the town of Miragoâne, the stronghold of Government Commissioner (Procureur) Ernest Muscadin, a rebel in the eyes of the Port-au-Prince authorities, who don't appreciate his approach to gang justice. Yet he has earned a reputation among Haitians for being incorruptible. As a result, the population of the Miragoanaise agglomeration has effortlessly embraced the anti-government protest movement. As a result, not a day goes by without the city turning into a people's court of protest to demand the resignation of the Prime Minister and his allies. Monday, January 29, 2024, was a particularly eventful day. Schools and businesses were paralyzed. The Port of Miragoâne, one of the busiest in the country, operated at a snail's pace while the doors of banks and other public and private administrations remained closed.

The population was more than motivated on February 7, 2024. Several thousand demonstrators took to the streets as far as the Desruisseaux crossroads, shouting "Si Ariel pa ale, nap mete dife" and "Ti rèz la se pou pèp la." BSAP agents also took to the streets, as they had been doing for weeks. Having come from Chalon, they ended their demonstration on the Gros-Trou side without entering downtown Miragoâne, much to the disappointment of the demonstrators who wanted to go there and take their demands to the Delegation (Prefecture). It should be noted that no public or private institution was able to function in the Nippes region. In particular, the ONA premises were attacked by protesters. Finally, on the same February 7, 2024, a press conference was organized by the EDE party of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Claude Joseph, with relatives of former Senator Guy Philippe.



Arrest of political activist Myrthil Marcelin dit Arab.

Heading back towards the capital, things are no better. The town of Petit-Goâve, in the Palmes region serving as a bridge between the West and the South, has for years been the marker by which observers measure the extent of socio-political protest against the powers that be in Port-au-Prince. Faustin Soulouque's town has maintained its reputation as a protest town, ahead of Gonaïves and Saint Marc in Artibonite. In Petit-Goâve, the Palace of Justice and the Town Hall were set on fire, while the population closed Route Nationale N° 2, the only road leading to three

departments, notably Grand'Anse. Reputed to be one of the toughest towns in terms of anti-government mobilization, Petit-Goâve is and remains one of the spearheads of Guy Philippe's movement, where, moreover, Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster first proclaimed his intention to lead a revolution to bring down the quasi-feudal "system" that has governed the Republic since its foundation. A few kilometers away, we enter the town of Grand-Goâve.

More timid than its big sister, Grand-Goâve is nonetheless on the warpath. Barricades are legion here too. After negotiations with the rioters, whose demands were no different from those of the rest of the country: the resignation of the head of the Transition, Ariel Henry, it was difficult to cross the town. Finally, the town of Léogâne comes into view, a large suburb to the south of Port-au-Prince. It, too, has been the scene of anti-government protests for several decades. Between 2018 and 2021, Léogâne was one of the key cities for the anti-Jovenel Moïse opposition. It hosted several congresses, meetings and other opposition activities throughout the presidency of Jovenel Moïse. One of these was a large rally at which participants armed with machetes, cutlasses and other edged weapons said they were ready to do battle with the government if the President did not relinquish the National Palace by February 7, 2021. By refusing to comply, even though his constitutional mandate ran until February 7 2022, the Head of State paid with his life.

Under Ariel Henry, the de facto Prime Minister, Léogâne is back in action, albeit less warlike but no less active in the fight to overthrow the head of the Transition. Although opposition leaders have not yet organized any major events in the City of Queen Anacaona, several demonstrations have already taken place in this town so close yet so far from the capital. From Léogâne to Port-au-Prince, it's just a straight shot across Carrefour, the town of the late Eric Jean-Baptiste de Père Eternel Loto, Secretary General of the RDNP and victim of insecurity, assassinated by a gang under the control, it is said, of a former opposition leader now in power. But to get there, you need patience and, above all, courage. Cardiac patients abstain! And with

good reason. There's the famous Mariani traffic circle, recently occupied by gangs who are vying with each other in their efforts and strategies to take over more of the territories that the government is handing over to them, or at least abandoning. These are the famous "Lost Territories" of the Republic to which the Minister of Justice, Émmelie Prophète-Milcé, was alluding.

At this strategic junction, motorists and travellers have three options: (1) pay a toll to the gangs controlling this territory, (2) be executed on the spot for refusing to comply, or (3) try to force their way through, with the guarantee of being killed a few meters away for disobeying the laws of these criminals. Leaving this tollbooth run by criminals, after the requisite formalities, you enter Carrefour, a once peaceful suburb. Today, faced with the indifference of the central authorities to the fate of the population, the latter is also raising its voice and calling for the resignation of the Transition regime. At a time when demonstrators are protesting against insecurity and the high cost of living, the Prime Minister's departure has been added to the list of demands. In Carrefour, in fact, it is becoming difficult, even risky, to venture out on the rare, very rare public transport that runs between Carrefour and downtown Port-au-Prince, or even as far as Portail Léogâne.

If, by risking your life, you manage to do so, you are quickly caught up by the protest movement that has been sweeping the country for over a month. Port-au-Prince, the megalopolis that has been hibernating for two years, is suddenly awakening to the cries and calls of old and new opposition leaders. There are those who joined Ariel Henry from day one, following publication of the Core Group's famous Tweet naming or confirming him as Prime Minister in place of Claude Joseph. Then there were those who followed up on the various Accords – notably Musseau and December 21, 2022 – which integrated the Transition regime. Since then, historical figures such as André Michel, Marjorie Michel of the SDP, Edmonde Supplice Beauzile's Fusion, INITE and a branch of PHTK have maintained their support for the Prime Minister, while others have not. Jean-Charles Moïse of Pitit Dessalines and

Liné Balthazar of PHTK have distanced themselves and intend to show the way out of the Prime Minister's office to an Ariel Henry clinging to power as if he had received a mandate that he intends to defend, following the example of his predecessors.

In the capital, it's at the airport crossroads, under the Nazon viaduct or crossroads, also known as Kafou rezistans, that protesters gather whenever they intend to mobilize against the governments in power. Ever since almost all opposition leaders set February 7, 2024 as the date on which Ariel Henry was to leave power, this symbolic spot has been packed to the rafters. This crossroads is the nerve center of Delmas and Port-au-Prince, even in these times of rampant insecurity when gangs are not far away. This district of Delmas 17 is almost non-stop, day and night. Day after day, week after week, anti-government rallies continue unabated. From Carrefour Nazon, the demonstrators head for Pétion-Ville. Sometimes, when they arrive at the Delmas 60 junction, depending on the route chosen or authorized, they either head for Delmas 60 to arrive in front of the Villa d'Accueil in Musseau, where the Prime Minister's office is now located, and then take the route de Bourdon to get to the Champ de Mars in the vicinity of the National Palace.

Alternatively, they could continue from Delmas road to the center of Pétion-Ville, before turning back via avenue Panaméricaine or route de Bourdon to downtown Port-au-Prince, with an inevitable stopover in front of the Prime Minister's offices in Musseau.

Despite the insecurity, the capital is the center of the protests, where the most material damage and casualties have been recorded. In spite of everything, the forces of law and order continue to ensure the protection of administrative buildings and the safety of members of the government and senior civil servants.

To be continued...

Source: [*Haïti Liberté / Translation by Internationalist 360°*](#)

