

*South Florida*

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## Haitians in South Florida mourn endless turmoil after assassination of president

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FORT LAUDERDALE — Haitians living in South Florida, accustomed to frequent disaster in their homeland, said on Wednesday the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in his residence shows the nation's relentless turmoil is unlikely to cease anytime soon. Gunmen assassinated Moïse and wounded his wife early Wednesday. The first lady, Martine Moïse, was flown to Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport by Trinity Air Ambulance on Wednesday afternoon for treatment at Baptist Hospital in Miami, Local10 News reported. Officials said her vitals are stable but critical.

In South Florida, which has the largest concentration of Haitians and Haitian-Americans in the United States, many saw the death of the president with distrust and cynicism. They questioned how the assassins got inside his residence, and said they didn't like the president much anyway.

June Solide, shopping at the Leogane market, a Haitian grocery store in Delray Beach, said she disapproved of Moïse's leadership and believed he did nothing to address the problem of hungry children in the country. She said his selfishness made him an ineffective leader. "He only worried about his own family," said Solide, who left Haiti as a toddler and has not returned.



In this Feb. 7, 2017 file photo, Haitian President Jovenel Moïse hugs his wife Martine after being sworn in at Parliament in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Moïse was assassinated in an attack on his private residence early Wednesday, July 7, 2021, and the first lady was shot in the overnight attack and hospitalized, according to a statement from the country's interim prime minister. (Dieu Nalio Chery/AP)

Willy Madey, of Delray Beach, working at Leogane, hopes Haiti will change for the better after Moïse's assassination.

He said the late president cared more about his personal wealth than saving the country, and believes that Moïse exploited poor Haitians, contributing to the political dysfunction that Haiti experiences today.

“People can't visit family because there's not justice,” he said. “A country can't function without justice.”

Jay Joseph, on a visit to the Sakpase Compas.com store in Fort Lauderdale, wondered how the assassins were able to enter the president's home.

“It had to be an inside job,” Joseph said. “How could they have access to the president? It's got to be someone behind it, you know? I've never seen that, even in a movie.”

These reactions are not surprising, considering the centuries of political convulsions and public health crises caused by revolutions, foreign occupations, brutal dictatorships, hurricanes and famines, said [Giselle Jamison, director of the political science program at St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens](#). She said the situation is likely to get worse before it gets better.



In this Feb. 7, 2017 file photo, newly sworn-in Haitian President Jovenel Moïse walks with Police Chief Michel-Ange Gedeon past National Police at the National Palace after his inauguration ceremony at Parliament in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Moïse was assassinated in an attack on his private residence early Wednesday, July 7, 2021, according to a statement from the country's interim prime minister. (Dieu Nalio Chery/AP)

Jamison said the international community needs to help Haiti, but Haitians at home and abroad need to take the reins and establish honest government, she said.

“The political process has been broken for a long time,” she said. “Then you have COVID, which is going to get profoundly aggravated by this. The distrust is understandable.”

Christina Romelus, a Boynton Beach city commissioner, agreed. Still, she said an assassination cannot be justified.

“The killing of a head of state, no matter what your political affiliation is, is not warranted,” said Romelus, who was born in Haiti and came to the United States when she was 6.

President Biden said the U.S. is ready to provide assistance.

“We condemn this heinous act, and I am sending my sincere wishes for First Lady Moïse’s recovery. The United States offers condolences to the people of Haiti, and we stand ready to assist as we continue to work for a safe and secure Haiti,” he said in a statement. Moïse ruled by decree for more than two years after Haiti — already enduring an escalation of gang violence, anti-government protests and a recent surge in coronavirus

infections — failed to hold elections and the opposition demanded he step down in recent months.



Soldiers patrol in Pétion Ville, the neighborhood where the late Haitian President Jovenel Moïse lived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Wednesday, July 7, 2021. Moïse was assassinated in an attack on his private residence early Wednesday, and first lady Martine Moïse was shot in the overnight attack and hospitalized, according to a statement from the country's interim prime minister. (Joseph Odelyn/AP)

The country's economic, political and social woes have deepened recently, with gang violence spiking heavily in Port-au-Prince, inflation spiraling, and food and fuel becoming scarce in a country where 60% of the population makes less than \$2 a day. These troubles come as Haiti still tries to recover from a devastating 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew in 2016.

Opposition leaders accused Moïse of seeking to increase his power, including by approving a decree that limited the powers of a court that audits government contracts and another that created an intelligence agency that answers only to the president. Haiti needs immediate support from the United States, American elected officials said on Wednesday.

U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson, D-Miami Gardens, who represents more Haitian-Americans in her district than any other in the U.S., recommended that the interim Haitian government ask President Biden for help with security.

“I call upon Haiti’s acting prime minister to reach out to President Biden for additional U.S. security enforcement. I also urge the Haitian people to remain calm during this international crisis and come together to save their nation,” she wrote.

State Rep. Marie Woodson, D-Hollywood, said she was deeply saddened by the “senseless act.”

“I send the people of Haiti my love and prayers and will continue to advocate for peace as we deal with this senseless act coupled by the instability and insecurity in Haiti,” Woodson said. “I urge President Joe Biden, the United Nations, and the international community to work closely with Haitian officials to get to the bottom of this atrocity.”