



***Fall of Two Communes in the Centre Department into the Hands of Armed Gangs: Transitional Authorities Worsen the Country's Security Crisis***

***April 10, 2025***

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**A. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

1. The coordinated armed attack on Mirebalais during the night of March 30 to 31, 2025, carried out by the 400 Mawozo and the Canaan-based Taliban gangs, led respectively by Wilson JOSEPH, alias *Lanmò san Jou*, and Jeff LAROSE, alias *Jeff Gwo Lwa*, resulted in the fall of two key communes in Haiti's Centre Department: Mirebalais and Saut-d'Eau. These areas are now under the control of armed gangs.
2. The National Human Rights Defense Network (RNDDH) and its regional structure in the Centre Department, deeply concerned about this situation, are sharing preliminary field information related to the capture of these two communes with all interested stakeholders.
3. As part of this investigation, the RNDDH and its regional branch held interviews with:

- The Dean of the Court of First Instance of Mirebalais
- The Government Commissioner of Mirebalais
- The Chief of the Mirebalais Police Station
- The Departmental Delegate of the Centre
- Victims and their relatives
- Local residents

## **B. ACCOUNT OF THE ARMED ATTACKS IN MIREBALAIS AND SAUT-D'EAU**

### **a) Armed Attack in Mirebalais**

4. Between 2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. on the night of March 30–31, 2025, the aforementioned gang members, all part of the terrorist organization *Viv Ansanm*—attacked Mirebalais via Trianon (2nd communal section of Grand-Boucan), burning numerous homes and several vehicles.
5. Initially, the local self-defense group *Bakòp Feray*, agents of the Protected Areas Security Brigade (BSAP), and officers from the Haitian National Police (PNH) resisted. However, despite repeated calls for help and reinforcements, no assistance came. By 8:00 a.m., the resistance collapsed, and the gangs entered the town.

6. Police officers stationed at the Mirebalais Police Station and Civil Prison fled. Armed gangs then set fire to the police station and took control of the prison, orchestrating a mass escape of the inmates.
7. Vehicles parked around and inside the prison were set ablaze. Office and IT equipment, along with firearms, were looted. The gangs then set fire to inmates' mattresses. Although the structure suffered limited damage, the facility is currently unusable.
8. The Mirebalais police station was also partially burned.
9. The gangs went on to torch several buildings and private homes and also burned down the Mirebalais public market.
10. Reinforcements, including vehicles from Verrettes and specialized PNH units from Port-au-Prince, only began arriving around 11:00 a.m., after the gangs had already inflicted major harm on the population.
11. That same day, March 31, 2025, staff and patients at the Mirebalais University Hospital were evacuated due to fears of further attacks, which indeed occurred. Since that date, armed gangs have occupied the town, launching attacks on anyone entering and engaging in clashes with law enforcement, increasing the death toll and destruction while instilling unprecedented fear in the population.

## **b) Mass Prison Escape from Mirebalais Civil Prison**

12. As noted, the gangs facilitated the escape of inmates from the Mirebalais Civil Prison, which held 533 detainees as of March 24, 2025. Of these, 467 (88%) were in pre-trial detention, and 66 (12%) were convicted. Only one inmate, Jean Paul CANTAVE, alias *Pipo*, failed to escape; he was executed on-site by the gang members.

13. According to RNDDH and its regional structure, at least 60 individuals—including gang members and escaped inmates, were killed in downtown Mirebalais during the gunfights that followed the arrival of reinforcements between March 31 and April 2, 2025.

### **c) Armed Attack on Saut-d'Eau**

14. On the afternoon of April 3, 2025, the commune of Saut-d'Eau, which borders Mirebalais, fell to armed gangs. Some say this was facilitated by the redeployment of law enforcement to Mirebalais, leaving Saut-d'Eau vulnerable.

15. Due to prior attacks, most of Saut-d'Eau's population had already fled by the time the gangs arrived on April 3. Nonetheless, lives were lost, and material damage was extensive.

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## **C. REPORTED TOLL**

16. This report, compiled by RNDDH and its Centre regional structure, was prepared with support from the Haitian Youth Society (SOJHA).

17. Between March 30 and April 8, 2025, the RNDDH recorded:

- 23 civilian victims, including 19 killed and 3 missing;
- 1 police officer killed;
- Over 60 gang members and escaped detainees killed, mainly in downtown Mirebalais.

18. On the night of March 30–31, four individuals were murdered in Bastille, Trianon area:

- Gerson CHERESTAL
- Wendel LOUIS
- Wilner JOSEPH
- Robenson RONDEVIL

19. On March 31, at least 13 others were killed, including:

- Camille BAZILE (died from gunshot wounds)
- Junior Robens LOUIS (security guard at Mirebalais University Hospital)
- Emilienne MASSANT
- Martial CHARLES

- Jeanne VOLTAIRE and Evanette ONEZAIRE (nuns from Sainte Thérèse Congregation)
- Maxime LOUIS
- Bernardo JACQUES
- Bettie and Rosie (residents of Rue Clerveau)
- “Ti Ben” (killed at Rue Louverture and Mombrun)
- “Baldé” and “Cyprius” (both killed in downtown Mirebalais)

20. On April 8, 2025, police officer Garry Junior LUMA of the Temporary Anti-Gang Unit (UTAG) was fatally shot near Mirebalais Market, Carrefour Péligre.

21. On the same day, Billy BELLEVUE, alias *Bèk Kare*, reportedly a member of the Mirebalais self-defense brigade, was also killed.

22. As noted, at least three civilians are missing, including two journalists:

- Jean Christophe COLLEAGUE (Voice of America) – his home was burned, and he has not been seen since.
- Roger Claudy ISRAEL (Radio Télé Ginen and R.C. FM) and his brother Marco ISRAEL – kidnapped and falsely accused by captors of being BSAP members.

23. Several people were wounded by gunfire, including a young girl who was with the slain nuns on March 31.

24. The material losses resulting from these attacks are also considerable.

25. In Mirebalais and Saut-d'Eau, numerous homes belonging to private individuals and former state officials, as well as both public and private institutions, were set on fire by the armed gangs:

- On March 31, 2025, the Mirebalais public market, the Mirebalais Civil Prison, and the Mirebalais Police Station were all set ablaze.
- On April 2, 2025, the Radio Transparence FM station, located in downtown Saut-d'Eau, along with the residence of former Deputy Romuald SMITH, were burned down.
- On April 3, 2025, the residence of former Senator Simon Dieuseul DESRAS, located in the Saut-d'Eau waterfall area, and the home of Pierre Richard SAINT-VICTOR, were also set on fire.
- On April 9, 2025, the restaurant *La Fourchette d'Or*, located along Route 9 and frequently visited by former Deputy Abel DESCOLLINES, was also burned down.

#### **D. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

26. These armed attacks in Mirebalais and Saut-d'Eau mark the 13th violent episode in Haiti since the April 25, 2025 installation of the Transitional Presidential Council (CPT). By ignoring the Western Department's collapse, the transitional authorities show they have no real plan to restore citizens' rights and public safety.

27. The absence of state response has turned the police into firefighters—constantly reacting without strategic direction—while towns fall one after another. Unlike state authorities, the *Viv Ansanm* terrorist groups follow a deliberate plan, gradually conquering provincial towns with minimal resistance, usually from civilian self-defense brigades rather than state forces.

28. RNDDH denounces the loss of lives and destruction in both communes, especially since the population and local brigades had repeatedly raised alarms that were ignored.
29. RNDDH maintains that if previous massacres had been prosecuted and preventive measures adopted, this pattern of state-sponsored terror—entrenched since 2018—would not have escalated to this point.
30. Rather than taking serious action to halt the spread of gang violence, the transitional authorities offer hollow promises. While claiming to adopt a “war budget,” they are instead draining public funds to maintain lavish lifestyles.
31. On April 7, 2025, a new state of emergency was declared for one month. Yet merely declaring emergencies without equipping police with necessary resources, like effective armored vehicles, will not solve the insecurity crisis.
32. Local authorities and residents now describe Mirebalais and Saut-d’Eau as ghost towns emptied of residents and controlled by gangs. Barricades prevent access, and the burned police station remains under gang control.
33. Given the transitional government’s inaction and failure to properly equip the police, RNDDH demands accountability and reiterates that restoring national security is among their key responsibilities. Therefore, RNDDH recommends:
- A thorough investigation to determine responsibility for the attacks in Mirebalais and Saut-d’Eau;
  - Prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators and their accomplices;



- Immediate reinforcement of security forces in the Centre Department to retake control of the affected communes and prevent further attacks;
- Psychological, financial, and medical support for displaced and affected victims;
- Reestablishment of basic security conditions to enable displaced persons to return home;
- Full allocation of intelligence funds—currently spent in total opacity by the CPT, the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Defense, and Ministry of Justice and Public Security—to security forces in the field.