

BRIAN J. MAST, FLORIDA
CHAIRMAN

JAMES LANGENDERFER
STAFF DIRECTOR



GREGORY W. MEEKS, NEW YORK
RANKING MEMBER

SAJIT GANDHI
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

April 30, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to express our grave concern with the State Department's stated intent to designate gangs in Haiti as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) without first having a comprehensive strategy to support Haitian authorities' ability to counter the gangs. We call on you to develop an actual strategy that addresses the urgent needs of the Haitian people, support for stabilizing the security situation, and policies that support greater economic opportunity, including the HOPE/HELP trade preference agreement for Haitians. While we support efforts to target the financial support of violent gangs wreaking havoc on innocent Haitians, we are concerned that an FTO designation, absent a clear, comprehensive U.S. strategy to defeat the gangs and their enablers, is counterproductive and will only exacerbate Haitians' suffering.

An FTO designation imposes broad legal and financial sanctions that deter non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies from operating due to fear of legal exposure—even when their work is purely humanitarian in nature. Humanitarian aid serves as an essential bulwark against the gangs and their control of local economic activity in Haiti, and an FTO designation risks creating a chilling effect on the delivery of this much needed assistance. The gangs exploit the security vacuum they helped create, recruiting young men and children with false promises of protection and pay. If an FTO designation undermines aid delivery across 85% of Port-au-Prince or in Haiti's Artibonite department, it's the Haitian people—not the gangs—who will be punished. As reports of cholera and scabies in Haiti are on the rise, and with your

cutting of funds to programs like the Improved Health Service Delivery project, which provided health services for maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition, HIV, tuberculosis, and water, sanitation and hygiene to over 3 million people, including 20,000 living with HIV-AIDS, further cuts to humanitarian assistance will have devastating results.

We also believe the Department can make better use of sanctions authorities to levy targeted sanctions against individuals facilitating and benefitting from gang-fueled instability in Haiti. On August 20th, 2024, the Treasury Department sanctioned former President Michel Martelly for perpetuating the ongoing crisis in Haiti. If the State Department seeks more authorities to sanction enablers of Haiti's crisis, we want to work with you to pass H.R. 2643, the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act of 2025, a bipartisan bill we have introduced that would levy sanctions on Haitian political and economic elites financing, arming, and benefitting from ongoing violence and the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. This legislation would enable a concerted effort against the gangs while keeping intact humanitarian assistance to Haitians enduring gang violence and instability.

Prioritizing an FTO designation before taking full advantage of the other tools available to address the gang violence—like the use of additional unilateral or coordinated sanctions—or developing a strategy to make the Multilateral Support Mission effective is shortsighted. We remain concerned over the situation in Haiti and support a strong—and smart—U.S. response. So, we urge you to reconsider any designation that would prove counterproductive in countering the gangs and further increase the suffering of innocent Haitians. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gregory W. Meeks".

GREGORY W. MEEKS
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick".

SHEILA CHERFILUS-MCCORMICK
Member of Congress