

Haitian President Jovenel Moïse assassinated in his home

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Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated on Wednesday at his home by a group of unidentified gunmen, interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph said. Joseph said he was now in charge of the country.



President of the Republic of Haiti Jovenel Moïse speaks onstage during the 2018 Concordia Annual Summit, September 25, 2018, in New York City.

LEIGH VOGEL/GETTY IMAGES FOR CONCORDIA SUMMIT

Haiti has suffered for years from political instability, and Moïse had been

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governing by decree. Critics had accused the 53-year-old of ruling like an autocrat.

"An unidentified group of individuals, some of whom were speaking in Spanish, attacked the private residence of the President of the Republic and mortally wounded him," Joseph said in a statement on Wednesday. "The First Lady was wounded by a bullet and the necessary measures are being taken."

According to the [Miami Herald](#), the gunmen stormed Moïse's home in a hilltop community of the capital, Port-au-Prince, claiming to be agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

Videos seen by the Herald showed gunmen telling people at Moïse's home to "put down your weapons. This is DEA." Haitian sources told the Miami newspaper that the assailants were heard speaking English and Spanish, and that they were not DEA agents, but "mercenaries."

Prime Minister Joseph condemned what he called a "hateful, inhumane and barbaric act," adding that Haiti's National Police and other authorities had the situation in the Caribbean country under control.

The nation of more than 11 million people had grown increasingly unstable and disgruntled under Moïse's rule. Its economic, political and social woes have deepened, with gang violence spiking heavily in Port-au-Prince, inflation spiraling and food and fuel becoming scarcer at times in a country where 60% of the population makes less than \$2 a day.

These troubles come as Haiti still tries to recover from the devastating 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew that struck in 2016.

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Moïse had been ruling by decree for more than two years after the country failed to hold elections, which led to Parliament being dissolved. Opposition leaders have accused him of seeking to increase his power, including 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.

In recent months, opposition leaders demanded the he step down, arguing that his term legally ended in February 2021. Moïse and supporters maintained that his term began when he took office in early 2017, following a chaotic election that forced the appointment of a provisional president to serve during a year-long gap.

Haiti was scheduled to hold general elections later this year.

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