

# American missionaries killed by gangs in Haiti

May 27, 2024

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Three people—a Haitian man and an American couple who all worked for a Christian mission organization—were killed by gang members near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on May 23.

The group reportedly had been kidnapped earlier in the evening after leaving a youth event hosted at a church.

Natalie and Davy Lloyd moved from Oklahoma to Haiti in 2022 to work for Missions in Haiti, Inc. The third person killed was the Haitian director of the organization, Jude Montis.

Davy's parents, David and Alicia Lloyd, who founded the organization in 2000, shared the news of their death in a Facebook post around 2 a.m. Friday, saying the couple had been shot by gang members around 9 p.m.

"We are devastated," wrote the couple in their post.

Natalie's father, Missouri Representative Ben Baker (R), shared the news on Facebook with a picture of the couple, expressing his grief and asking for prayers.

"My heart is broken in a thousand pieces," Baker posted.

"I've never felt this kind of pain. Most of you know my daughter and son-in-law Davy and Natalie Lloyd are full time missionaries in Haiti. They were attacked by gangs this evening and were both killed. They went to Heaven together."

The three victims had just left the youth event when they were ambushed

“by a gang of 3 trucks full of guys,” according to a post shared on the organization’s Facebook page before their deaths were confirmed.

“Their lives are in danger. I have been trying all my contacts to get a police armored car there to evacuate them out to safety but can’t get anyone to do so,” read the post, whose author is unclear.

## **Missions in Haiti serves children**

Missions in Haiti, an evangelistic organization, offers a number of services for children, including two permanent residence homes, a school and a bakery.

“We believe the doors are still open for Haiti’s children to be changed by the Gospel,” reads the organization’s website.

The organization runs a “House of Compassion” near Port-au-Prince, where 36 children live, and the “Good Hope Boys Home,” which can house up to 25. It also runs the Bon Espoir school (Good Hope School), a church and a bakery that employs adults who previously were raised in Missions in Haiti facilities and provides bread for its residential centers.

While many schools have been forced to close due to the gang violence, Missions in Haiti had remained open.

In a May 2023 update to the website, the organization called their area “relatively calm,” saying the gang leader in their area controlled one of the “nicer gangs” in Haiti.

“This gang works to keep the ‘bad guys’ out of our area, and we pray that they will continue to be strong enough to keep some semblance of peace in this area,” according to the site.

# Missionaries targeted by kidnappers

An increasing number of Christian missionaries working in Haiti have been the target of kidnappings perpetrated by gang members. The criminal groups rely on kidnappings to make money through ransoms. UNICEF reported an increase in the number of abductions since 2023, noting that women and children were most at risk of being kidnapped.



El Roi Academy students march down on the street after a press conference to demand the freedom of New Hampshire nurse Alix Dorsainvil and her daughter, who have been reported kidnapped, in the Cite Soleil neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Thursday, Aug. 3, 2023. (AP Photo/Odelyn Joseph)

In October of 2021, a group of 17 Christian Aid Ministries missionaries—16 Americans and one Canadian—were kidnapped by gangs. Twelve escaped, and the others were later freed.

In the past few years, the country has plunged into turmoil, aggravated by the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021. In the months

following the president's assassination, armed gangs vying for control of the capital banded together and took advantage of the political unrest.

After Moïse's death, the government was run by Prime Minister Ariel Henry, whose legitimacy was heavily contested through street protests, until he resigned in April of this year. A transitional council was named to lead the country after Henry's departure.

The gangs now control 90 percent of the capital and have blocked several roads into Port-au-Prince and the city's main port, stalling the flow of goods into the country. Since January, gang violence has killed or injured 2,500 and displaced 35,000, according to the United Nations.

In March, the country experienced a spike in violence when gang members freed thousands of inmates jailed in the capital's two largest prisons.

A peacekeeping mission led by Kenyan police officers, including officers from Chile, Jamaica, Grenada, Burundi, Nigeria and others, is set to arrive in Port-au-Prince this week to help Haitian police fight the gangs. A total of 1,000 Kenyan police officers will be deployed.