

Seventeen with Christian missions agency kidnapped in Haiti

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This developing story, originally posted on Oct. 18, was updated on Oct. 19 to include additional information.

Sixteen Americans and one Canadian representing Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries were kidnapped Oct. 16 by an armed gang in Haiti and are being held for ransom.

A dozen missionaries and their five children were returning to their home base after visiting an orphanage when they were abducted in Ganthier, about 20 miles east of Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince.

"We are seeking God's direction for a resolution, and authorities are seeking ways to help," an Oct. 17 [statement from Christian Aid Ministries](#) reads.

Call to prayer

The statement requests prayer not only for the hostages and their extended families, their friends and their churches, but also for the kidnappers. Christian Aid Ministries is a nonprofit ministry largely supported by Amish, Mennonite and other conservative Anabaptist churches.

"Pray for those who are seeking God's direction and making decisions regarding this matter," the statement continues. "As an organization, we commit this situation to God and trust him to see us through. May the Lord be magnified and many more people come to know his love and salvation."

The 400 Mawozo gang, a group also blamed for the abduction of five priests and two nuns in April, demanded \$1 million ransom for each of the hostages in exchange for their release, the Haitian Minister of Justice told the *Washington Post*. The gang reportedly controls much of the Croix-des-Bouquets area, which includes Ganthier.

“Our hearts are heavy with the news of this recent kidnapping; we are actively keeping them and their families in prayer,” said Jeff King, president of [International Christian Concern](#), an organization focused on the persecution of Christians.

“Haiti has experienced a very challenging year, one which has been deeply impactful on the church and its ministry activities. The targeted abductions of ministry staff are a tragic reality in many countries, and we are saddened to learn that this type of pattern is deepening within the U.S.’s neighboring country of Haiti.

“We urge the U.S. authorities to remain engaged in this current issue and for the religious freedom community to take a deeper look at how Haiti’s gang-related activities are impacting the activities and expression of various faith communities.”

One is a series of kidnappings



File photo of worship at First

Baptist Church in Port-au-Prince,
Haiti. (Courtesy of Elijah Brown,
BWA)

The kidnapping of the Christian Aid Ministries missionaries occurred less than three weeks after [gunmen attacked First Baptist Church in Port-au-Prince](#), killing 60-year-old deacon Sylner Lafaille and kidnapped his wife. Marie Marthe Laurent Lafaille was [released](#) four days later.

Political upheaval, civil unrest and natural disasters have rocked Haiti in the last four months. Haitian President Jovenel Moise was assassinated on July 7. An earthquake measuring 7.2 on the Richter scale hit southwest Haiti on Aug. 14, killing more than 2,200 people and leaving tens of thousands homeless. Two days later, the region experienced flash floods after Tropical Storm Grace hit.

In late August, the U.S. State Department issued a [Level 4 travel advisory](#) for Haiti, saying, “Do not travel to Haiti due to kidnapping, crime, civil unrest and COVID-19.”



Jim Denison

In an article about the latest kidnapping of missionaries to Haiti, Jim Denison noted, “Haiti has the highest per-capita kidnapping rate on earth; recorded kidnappings so far this year have spiked six-fold over the same period last year.”

In his [Oct. 18 article](#), Denison—co-founder of the Dallas-based Denison

Forum—urges readers not only to pray for the kidnapped missionaries and their families, but also to “emulate the missionaries’ courage with our obedience.”

“When last did God call you to pay a price for your faith?” he asks. “Will you follow his light wherever he leads, whatever it takes, whatever the cost?”