

Ongoing gang clashes leave 21 dead in Haiti



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Port-au-Prince, July 24 (RHC)-- At least 21 people were killed in the commune of Petite Rivière in the department of l'Artibonite, in north-central Haiti, as a result of new clashes between rival armed gangs, humanitarian sources reported.

The number of victims of the armed conflict between the "Grand Grif" base and the gang led by Jean Denis in Petite-Rivière de l'Artibonite continues to rise. The Collectif Defenders Plus, a human rights organization, tallied up twenty dead as of Friday, July 22 of this year.

Anthonal Mortimé, co-director of the organization, who revealed the information to Juno7's editorial staff on Friday, said that the organization has two focal points collecting data in the department of Artibonite, in north-central Haiti.

The human rights defender stresses that among the victims several were chopped with machetes or burned alive. "Videos that have gone viral on the web show members of the civilian population, innocent people, people who have nothing to do with the conflict suffering humiliation and death. The situation is similar to that of Cité Soleil," Mortimé laments.

"The police is almost non-existent in the Artibonite department. People are alone. There is only one representative of justice present, the government commissioner Grand Pierre Estimé, who does his job with scarce means," said the director of the NGO for Human Rights ACPRODDH, Fritznel Joasil.

Less than a week ago, the United Nations reported that at least 234 people had been killed or injured in just five days of violence between rival gangs in the Cité Soleil neighborhood, the poorest in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital.

The spokesman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jeremy Laurence, recently urged the Haitian authorities to ensure the protection of fundamental rights and "combat impunity and sexual violence by strengthening human rights monitoring."

Nine countries led by Brazil presented before the United Nations Security Council a statement denouncing violence against women and girls in Haiti and called for international action for their protection.

Human rights organizations indicated that at least 300 people have died as a result of the conflict, most of them civilians and particularly vulnerable women and children.

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