

Kidnapping Prevention Tips

There has been a sharp increase of kidnappings in the metropolitan area of Port-Au-Prince involving uniform officers using armored vehicles in recent weeks. We have strongly encouraged the IPs to discuss these issues with the PLSO in order for us to report it to USAID and HNP leadership.

During the past three years, the security situation in Haiti overall (and in Port-Au-Prince in particular) has deteriorated significantly. This is the result of a persistent political crisis, a related upsurge in gang and criminal activity, and the continued weakening of the economic environment concurrent with the further depreciation of the national currency. The prolonged political crisis and tense security environment continue to have an adverse impact on the country's economy and hinder the Haitian government's ability to meet the basic needs of its people, to resolve long-standing governance issues, and to address humanitarian crises.

Haiti is in the midst of a kidnapping crisis of considerable proportions. Since 2020, kidnapping-for-ransom has increased consistently in the country. Approximately 10-15% of all reported cases in the Americas occurred in Haiti, despite the island-nation having less than 1% of the region's population.

If you witness a kidnapping attempt or completion, you should report it right away to the Haitian National Police (HNP) and the PLSO for assistance.

- **Haitian National Police (HNP): dial #114 or +509 3838 1111**
- **USAID Partner Liaison Security Office (PLSO): +509 3732 1010 or +509 3761 1010 or share via the alerts WhatsApp® English and Creole PLSO groups.**

The PLSO encourages the Implementing Partners (IPs) to account for personnel at all times. The projects should always properly plan traveling activities, tasks, and travel with a security mindset. The following tips are recommended by the PLSO:

- Always inform someone you trust of your movements.
- Keep your cellphone well-charged and avoid surfing for WiFi when in public places.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and remain vigilant at all times.
- Change your routes to your most frequented places, including work. The mind needs stimulation to keep you awake. The routine kills!
- Be wary of individuals at the same place (office, house, hotel, grocery, etc) for a long time.
- Don't assume anything. If you find something suspicious, report it to your security, the PLSO or HNP.
- Note the license plate and vehicle information of any vehicle you may have noticed behind you for some time.
- If you feel you have been followed or watched, do not go straight to your home or work. Go around the neighborhood once more.
 - If the person (s) is (are) still there, go to a secure location (police station, grocery store, etc) with armed guards or police.

- o If possible, call someone of trust and describe what is happening, including pertinent information.

It has been reported that kidnappers are posing as Haitian National Police (HNP) officers by wearing HNP uniforms or in civilian clothes with authentic government badges. The HNP and the PLSO are following leads to this report based on the witnesses' accounts. If approached and you have not asked for assistance, chances are, they are not proper authorities. The following recommendations should be followed with HNP:

- Cooperation is the best course of action. Be professional and remember communication is key.
- If driving and asked to stop at a checkpoint, ensure that the officers are really HNP officers (uniform, police vehicle, police plate, HNP logo on vehicle, etc).
- If you can proceed to a populated area, do so. Contact someone you trust while proceeding to a populated area and advise them of your location and the event.
- If you contact someone, always keep the line open, and do not disconnect.
- During a stop, you should roll down your window enough to communicate with the HNP officers. Unless obliged, do not exit the vehicle.
- If the HNP officer asks you to exit the vehicle, the PLSO should be contacted (either by you or the person you call on the line) and advised of the situation. We will contact the nearest Commissariat and have HNP dispatched to the location.
- Memorize a phone number to contact in case of emergency, which should be the reference person between the bandit and the PLSO.
- Additionally to the above, having a phone tracker, find my friends App, or a GPS tracker is a good idea, especially if you're on the road frequently.

What To Do If Kidnapped

- If you are conscious, follow your captors' instructions.
- You should not resist if they are trying to move you to another vehicle
- While being confined and transported, do not struggle, calm yourself mentally.
 - o If you are anxious, this may increase tension with the captors
 - o You should concentrate on surviving.
 - o Be aware of your five senses: feeling, hearing, smelling, touching, and seeing (if you're not blindfolded).
- You should not complain; speak normally. Avoid being belligerent and comply with all of the instructions.
- During the interrogation, cooperate; do not be antagonistic, or hostile towards your captors.
 - o Captives who display this type of behavior are often held longer or become the object of torture or punishment.
 - o Take a simple, tenable position and stick to it.
 - o Be polite and keep your temper.
 - o Give short answers.
 - o Be guarded when conversations turn to matters of substance.
 - o Don't be lured by a friendly approach.
- DO NOT try to fight your captors, this is dangerous!

Police Response

The emergency line in Haiti is 114. The HNP has more than 15,000 officers, approximately two-thirds of whom serve in the greater Port-au-Prince Metropolitan area (home to approximately three million residents). As a result, some communities do not have reliable access to police. The HNP has a limited response capability, which hinders the deterrent effect on criminals, who operate without fear of the uniformed or traffic police. Lack of resources frequently limits investigations. **Contacting the HNP Information and Operations Center at +509-3835-1111 or calling from a cell phone can be problematic.**

Haitians, particularly outside of Port-au-Prince, lack basic policing services. Many residents do not report crime. Underreporting or inaccurate reporting of crime appears to be an issue, partly due to the decentralized nature of the HNP commissariats, as well as the perception that judicial or investigative follow-up is ineffective. The investigative capacities are overtaxed and remain mostly centralized in Port-au-Prince. The judiciary system has struggled for decades to demonstrate strength and reliability.