

Timeline

1496 – Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, becomes the first European settlement in the West.

1697 – The “Land of Mountains”, modern day Haiti, is relinquished to France by Spain.

1789 – French revolution begins. Santo Domingo is the wealthiest and most profitable French Caribbean colony. African slaves are estimated to reach a half a million, and outnumber whites and free people 10 to 1.

1791 – Vincent Oge, a wealthy “free man of color” is captured after a failed attempt to lead an armed rebellion, and executed on a Middle Age torture device, the breaking wheel. His death is used as a rallying cry when Voodoo priest Boukman Dutty and Haitian slaves plot a rebellion.

1792 – France grants citizenship rights to wealthy “free men of color”, angering white colonists.

1793 – France declares war on Great Britain. Angry white Haitian colonists sign treaty with Great Britain in order to keep the slave trade going. Spain joins the war on the side of the British. Former slave Toussaint Louverture, who had been fighting for Spain, promises to join the French if slavery is abolished.

1794 – The French National Convention formally abolishes slavery in modern day Haiti and Louverture leads forces against Spain and Great Britain.

1801 – Louverture restores order in Haiti, abolishes slavery, and names himself governor for life over all of Hispaniola. In response, Napoleon Bonaparte sends his brother-in-law, Charles Leclerc, to reestablish slavery and French control.

1802 – Louverture is captured and dies in a French prison.

1803 – Haitian rebels defeat the French after learning of France’s desire to reinstate slavery.

1804 – Haiti gains independence. Rebel leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaims himself emperor.

1806 – Haiti is divided into a black north and mulatto south after the assassination of Dessalines.

1818 – Jean-Pierre Boyer becomes president of Haiti until his ouster in 1843. Haiti is reunited under his leadership, but blacks are excluded from power.

1915 – U.S. invades Haiti due to concerns over U.S. investments and property.

1934 – U.S. maintains economic control over Haiti until 1947, but withdraws troops.

1956 – Francois Duvalier, also known as Papa Doc, takes power in a coup.

1957 – Duvalier is elected president.

1964 – Duvalier proclaims himself ‘president for life’.

1971 – Duvalier’s 19-year old son, Jean-Claude, also known as ‘Baby Doc’, declares himself ‘president for life’ after his father’s death.

Early 1980’s – The reported spread of AIDS in Haiti radically reduces tourism, leading to further economic hardship.

1985 – Demonstrations and looting of food warehouses begin and eventually spread into revolt.

1986 – Despite shutting down independent media, reducing food prices, and attempting to quell the revolt with the police and military, Duvalier flees Haiti.

1988 – Brigadier General Prosper Avril leads a coup and establishes a military-controlled civilian government.

1990 – In Haiti’s first free elections, Jean-Bertrand Aristide becomes president.

1991 – Military coup ousts Aristide, resulting in sanctions by the U.S. and the Organization of American States.

1994 – U.S. threats of military intervention result in the transition from military rule back to civilian rule. As U.S. forces oversee the transition, Aristide returns.

1995 – UN peacekeepers replace U.S. forces. Aristide’s

Lavalas party candidate, Rene Preval, elected president.

1999 – After two years of political impasse, Preval announces the expiration of parliament.

2000 – Aristide reelected as president.

2001 – Former military leaders attempt to take over the National Palace in a coup.

2002 – Haiti is admitted to the Caribbean Community.

2004 – Aristide forced out when independence celebrations turn into revolt. Thousands are killed in floods. By the end of the year, political and gang violence, allegedly by Aristide supporters, overwhelm the capital.

2006 – Rene Preval elected president. UN launches plan to disarm gangs in exchange for grants and job training. U.S. lifts 1991 arms embargo.

2008 – In response to growing unrest over food shortages, the government reduces the price of rice. U.S. and the World Bank pledge \$30 million worth of food. Brazil sends more peacekeepers after Preval calls for more police to fight kidnappings.

2009 – Bill Clinton heads UN special envoy to Haiti. World Bank and IMF cancel \$1.2 billion in debt.

2010 – About 300,000 people are killed in an earthquake. U.S. takes over airport in order to ensure aid arrives in Haiti. International community pledges \$5.3 billion in aid. Swiss court agrees to release over \$4 million to Duvalier, though the Swiss Foreign Ministry pledges to block the release, citing alleged corruption by Duvalier. An estimated 6,000 die in cholera outbreak, sparking violence.

2011 – Run-off election is postponed. Duvalier returns to Haiti and is arrested and charged with corruption and misappropriation of funds during his 15 year rule. Michel Martelly becomes president.

2012 – Laurent Lamothe becomes Prime Minister. Protests break out due to the high cost of living. Protesters call for the resignation of President Martelly.

2013 – Elections scheduled for 2011 remain delayed, with many seats in the Senate left vacant. Protests continue.

2014 – Court rules the statute of limitations has not been reached for prosecuting Duvalier of human rights abuses. Duvalier dies. PM Lamothe resigns as protests escalate.

2015 – Over 100,000 people remain in IDP camps as a result of the 2010 earthquake. Refugee camps appear along the border of the Dominican Republic as more than 200,000 people are left stateless after being stripped of citizenship and forced out of the Dominican Republic. Second round of parliamentary elections scheduled to occur with presidential elections in October.



Torture Methods

NECKLACING is a form of torture popular during Jean-Bertrand Aristide's presidency. The prisoner is soaked in gasoline and a burning tire is placed around their neck with their hands and feet often tied or cut off. This type of torture was often done in public to inflict fear in others.

DJAK is a torture technique where the feet and arms of the prisoner are tied and locked by a stick placed behind the knees and inside the elbows, leaving the detainee in a crouching position with a round back. The detainee is then repeatedly beaten.

BEATINGS have been the most common form of torture utilized. Prisoners have reported being beaten with sticks, metal rods, chairs, and rifle butts to the point of breaking bones and death. Beatings have also consisted of pulling off finger and tail nails, shattering teeth, and gauging the eyes. Whippings with barbed wire have also occurred.

GENITAL MUTILATION is used to inflict severe harm and torture. Often the detainee is left to bleed out in the cell, as no medical attention is provided.

RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE against women and young girls has been used to inflict fear in the victim, the family, and the community. A detainee may also receive threats that female relatives will be raped, or claim that they have already been raped.

STRANGULATION with long strips of cloth often result in prisoners being shot and their bodies dumped.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE involves isolating the prisoner for long periods, interrupted only for violent interrogations or death threats. Food, water, clothing, and shower deprivation are often included. Witnessing violence against family members; such as, extinguishing cigarettes in the eyes of the prisoner's crying children has also been reported.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES and arbitrary detention occurred in order to silence political opposition.

INHUMANE PRISONS where 15-30 prisoners are kept in 3 m² cells with no ventilation, and no toilets. The prisoners are surrounded by feces and the decaying bodies of other prisoners. During the 'Baby Doc' regime, some prisoners were held in underground cells beneath the National Palace in complete darkness for months at a time. Haitian prisons are severely overcrowded due to the number of arbitrary arrests and long pretrial detentions.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION, including waking up prisoners randomly to throw freezing buckets of water on them has been reported.

ELECTRIC SHOCKS to the feet have been reported.

STARVATION is also a common tool of torture. When meals are actually allowed they consist of ground or undercooked corn; reports suggest prisoners consumed as little as 300 calories a day.

Current Situation

Language: French (official), Creole (official)

Population: 10,110,019

Religion: Roman Catholic (official) 54.7%, Protestant 28.5%, voodoo (official) 2.1%, other 4.6%, none 10.2%

Ethnic Groups: black 95%, mulatto and white 5%

POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND VIOLENCE have resulted in the powerful few, with the support of the army, usurping resources from the many. Most of the population is underfed, with 33% of children dying before the age of five. Life expectancy is about 53 years old. More than 80% of Haitians live in poverty and unemployment is estimated at approximately 60%. In addition, over 300,000 people have been infected with HIV/AIDS and estimates are that close to 200,000 children have been orphaned as a result.

RESTAVEK SYSTEM

The 'restavek' system of using child domestic workers, usually girls, remains in Haiti. Low income families typically send their girls to work for higher income families in return for their child being provided for and sent to school. However, many of these children are exploited by the families that take them in, and are physically and sexually abused by their employers. Estimates suggest that 225,000 children work as restaveks in Haiti.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN is exacerbated by insecurity, poverty, social attitudes and impunity. Women and girls living in refugee or makeshift camps are especially vulnerable to rape and sexual violence. Survivors have little recourse under the law as the Haitian criminal code regarding gender-based violence is not in line with international standards. In addition, the UN mission in Haiti has been accused of 93 allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation in the past eight years according to the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services.

THE JANUARY 2010 EARTHQUAKE caused widespread disaster and chaos in Port-au-Prince, home to over 2,000,000 people. Over 200,000 people were killed and about a million lost their homes. Looting, coupled with rape and sexual assault, was reported. Many women reported being forced to sell themselves in exchange for water and food. Rape and sexual abuse increased the already high rates of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Children have also reportedly been sexually abused and exploited, victims of kidnapping and forced separation from their families. The underlying poverty evidenced by poor sewage disposal, lack of water, food, and medical treatment, coupled with the presence of cholera, led to an outbreak of the disease, resulting in 470,000 infections and more than 6,000 deaths.

RETURN OF DUVALEIR

After the earthquake, Jean-Claude Duvalier, Baby-Doc, returned to Haiti from exile in France. Many victims of the atrocities of his regime hoped that he would be charged with human rights violations. After a 2013 ruling that the statute of limitations cannot be applied to crimes against humanity, an additional investigation was ordered. However, Duvalier died on October 4, 2014. According to a Human Rights Watch report, the government under Duvalier sent hundreds of political prisoners to the "Triangle of Death", a network of three prisons, where they died from torture or extrajudicial killings.