

The International Social Service calls for a firm and coordinated action to suspend all intercountry adoptions from Haiti

Haiti's current situation is critical and raises many concerns. Heavily armed gangs have expanded their turf and now control communities accounting for more than two million people, according to U.N. estimates¹, mostly women and children living amid frequent extra-judicial killings and sexual violence. Over the past years, the International Social Service (ISS) has been closely monitoring the situation of children and families; and the already dramatic situation has indeed significantly deteriorated as confirmed by ISS network member, RAPHA International². Many regional and international reports indicate that the country is facing a multidimensional crisis.³

Considering this context of escalating violence, instability, and extreme hardship, many families have been forced to flee for their own safety⁴, like some professionals, in charge of providing basic services to families and children in need, who had to abandon their workplaces and seek refuge. Many humanitarian organizations have indeed closed their shelters.⁵ Travelling to Haiti is currently strongly discouraged for obvious reasons.

As it has done in the past⁶, ISS strongly advises against carrying out intercountry adoptions (ICAs) from Haiti, as no ICA must take place in an emergency situation, whether in case of (armed) conflict, natural disaster, or considerable human displacement.

Such situations are indeed a breeding ground for illicit practices, in part because of the breakdown of transparency, proper control and oversight. Any emergency situation makes it “very difficult or impossible to ensure that the guarantees and procedures of the Convention are respected”⁷, such as properly implementing the subsidiarity principle and ascertaining the child's personal and family situation. As per international guidance⁸, priority should be given to children's safety as well as to family tracing and reunification efforts. In that sense, ISS wishes to emphasize the importance of concretely redirecting efforts to support endeavors that seek to strengthen local capacity to undertake family reintegration (see [ISS and RAPHA Technical Guidance for Family Reintegration in Haiti](#), published in July 2023) and ensure families in need receive adequate support.

While some countries seem to still carry out ICAs, more and more receiving States have accordingly stopped ICAs from Haiti, such as [France](#), [Ireland](#), Italy⁹, [The Netherlands](#), the [UK](#), [Scotland](#), [Spain](#)¹⁰ and [Switzerland](#).

¹ See <https://www.reuters.com/news/archive/haiti>.

² For further information on ISS network members, see: <https://iss-ssi.org/>.

³ See i.e. [OAS](#); [UN CRC Committee's Call for action](#); [UNICEF](#) and [Save the Children](#).

⁴ See i.e. [UNICEF SitRep 2023](#).

⁵ Information provided by ISS network member, RAPHA International (May 2023).

⁶ E.g. [ISS Ukraine factsheet](#), March 2022; ISS' Statement for the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

⁷ Factsheet N°2, Footnotes 5-6, [HCCH Toolkit for Preventing and Addressing Illicit Practices in Intercountry Adoption](#).

⁸ HCCH Toolkit, [Factsheets](#), GGP No 1, para. 502 and Annex 9, the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, Chapter IX.

⁹ ISS/IRC Communication received from CAI in July 2023.

¹⁰ As per the [latest data](#) provided by the Catalan government, ICAs from Haiti are still taking place to Cataluña.

ISS commends the position of these receiving States and urges other States to adopt the same approach. Indeed, as highlighted in previous occasions¹¹, **a firm and coordinated approach to the suspension of ICAs is of utmost importance to prevent illicit adoption practices as well as exercising undue pressure on a fragile country.**

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On behalf of ISS network

¹¹ See for example, [ISS Ukraine factsheet](#), March 2022.