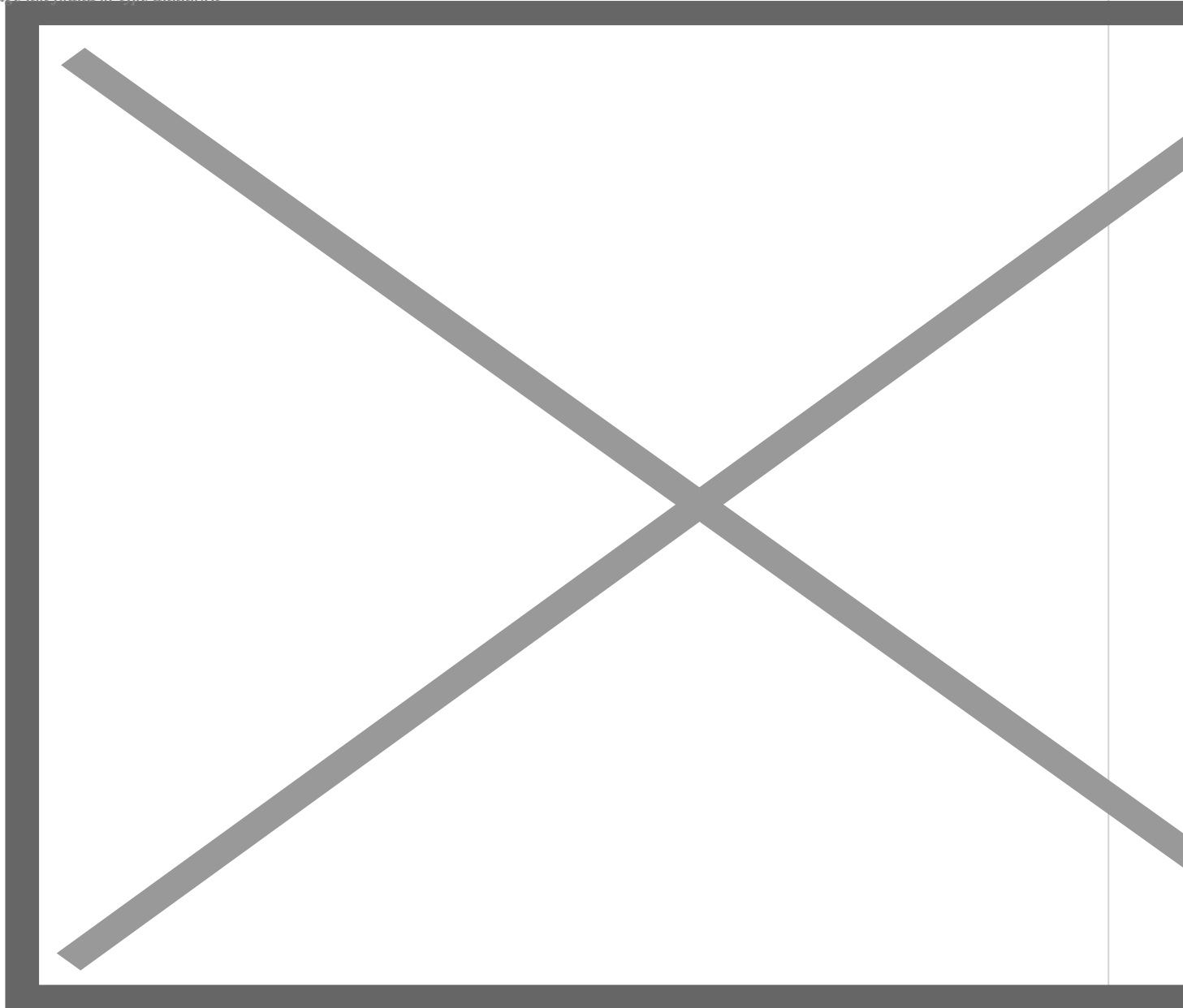


On the edge of the abyss

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Chaos and disorder reign in the streets of the Haitian capital. Photo: AP

By Guillermo Alvarado

The terrible situation in Haiti, the most impoverished country in the American continent, worsened during the week ending today due to the actions of gangs that have under their control large areas of Port-au-Prince, the capital, and other cities in the interior.

These armed groups terrorize the population and further deteriorate the quality of life, already damaged by misery, natural phenomena, the interference of foreign powers and the incapacity of local authorities to face these problems.

Several public services are affected in neighborhoods such as Martissant, the lower Delmas, Cité Soleil and Grand Ravine, in the south of the capital, where they have under their control even numerous schools that must pay them to be able to work.

The most pressing issue in recent days, however, is the lack of fuel which is already affecting numerous sectors, due to the fact that the gangs have blocked access to the main distribution centers and do not allow the circulation of tanker trucks.

Haiti's precarious hospital system has already sent alarm signals, because it will have to close several of its services.

If this threat becomes a reality, it would mean a hard blow for the most needy population, whose health is greatly affected by the lack of infrastructure, equipment, medicines and specialists.

It was also reported that the national potable water distribution company, which needs at least 18,000 gallons of diesel to operate for two weeks, may stop working, but has not been able to resupply.

Executives of the entity pointed out that it is not a lack of money, but that the main distributors are unable to work.

The United States, which is largely responsible for the instability prevailing in the Caribbean country, has limited itself to offering vehicles and supplies to the Haitian police and a few hours ago recommended its citizens to leave the territory while commercial flights are operating.

The warning could be a foretaste of a coming wave of violence and chaos, which in reality has been underway since the assassination last July of President Jovenel Moïse, which was used by armed gangs to increase their power.

It would be a good time for the international community to demonstrate its commitment to that country, not by invading as it usually does in similar cases, but by supporting it to find its way back to development, peace and stability.

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