News



Police officers patrol the area near the Saint-Helene orphanage in the Kenscoff neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Aug. 4, 2025. (AP Photo/Odelyn Joseph)

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Port-au-Prince, Haiti — August 5, 2025

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Eight people, including an Irish missionary and a 3-year-old child, remained missing on Aug. 4 after gunmen stormed an orphanage in Haiti, the latest attack in an area controlled by a powerful collection of armed gangs.

Authorities scrambled to relocate dozens of children and staff from the Saint-Hélène orphanage, run by Nos Petits Frères et Sœurs, an international charity with offices in Mexico and France. The orphanage cares for more than 240 children, according to its website.

No one has so far claimed responsibility for the attack early on Sunday. The area is controlled by a gang federation known as " Viv Ansanm," which the United States this year designated a foreign terrorist organization.

Among those abducted was Gena Heraty, an Irish missionary who has worked in Haiti since 1993 and oversaw the orphanage's special needs program for children and adults. She was assaulted in 2013 when suspects broke into the orphanage and killed her colleague, according to Irish media.

Her family issued a statement saying they were "absolutely devastated" by Sunday's kidnappings: "The situation is evolving and deeply worrying."

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Aug. 3 marked the latest high-profile kidnapping involving a foreign missionary. In 2021, the 400 Mawozo gang kidnapped 17 missionaries, including five children, from a U.S.-based organization in Ganthier, east of the capital, Port-au-Prince. The majority were held captive for 61 days.

The Aug. 3 kidnapping took place in Kenscoff, a once peaceful community in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. The doors to the orphanage remained closed on Monday as Haiti's Institute of Social Welfare and Research worked with UNICEF to

identify sites where children and employees could be relocated.

The lush green and incredibly steep mountains where the orphanage is located has been under attack by heavily armed gangs since January. The latest attack over the weekend forced farmers in the area to flee.

"We can't work," said 41-year-old farmer Sala Désire, who fled his home and carried a small oven up a mountain as he gathered his belongings and prepared for a 30-minute trek uphill.

Joceline Souffrant, 52, said she would follow him shortly.

"Everyone is running," she said. "We can't say in the area because of the shooting."

Simon Harris, Ireland's deputy prime minister, said in a statement that the kidnappings of Heraty and the others were "deeply worrying," and called for their immediate release.



Workers enter the Saint-Helene orphanage in the Kenscoff neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Aug. 4, 2025. (AP Photo/Odelyn Joseph)

In a past interview with the Irish Independent newspaper, Heraty recalled being threatened with death when suspects broke into the orphanage in 2013.

"They were quite aggressive. One had a hammer, one had a gun," she said. Heraty said her colleague was killed with a hammer after he rushed to help her and others.

"The last place you would expect a violent death to happen in Haiti would be in a house with special-needs people," she said. "Life is just not fair. We know that. We just have to accept it."

At least 175 people in Haiti were reported kidnapped from April to the end of June of this year, with 37% of those cases occurring in Port-au-Prince.

The United Nations said a majority of those kidnappings were blamed on the Grand Ravine and Village de Dieu gangs, which form part of the Viv Ansanm federation.