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A man mourns next to the covered body of a person in Kenscoff, Haiti, on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, Aug. 24, 2026, killed after a fatal overnight raid by an armed gang. A powerful gang coalition attacked a once peaceful farming community nestled in the hills above Haiti's capital late Aug. 23, killing at least 47 and kidnapping 50. (OSV News/Reuters/Patrice Noel)

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A deadly gang attack near Haiti's capital that saw dozens killed and kidnapped should cause the U.S. to "rethink" its ending of deportation protections for hundreds of thousands of Haitians, Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami told OSV News.

The Aug. 23 massacre, which took place in the village of Kenscoff — located outside the capital of Port-au-Prince — left more than 47 dead, with at least 50 kidnapped.

Last year, Irish lay missionary Gena Heraty was kidnapped from the Kenscoff-based orphanage she oversees and held hostage for a month before being released.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the latest violence, with his spokesperson noting in an Aug. 25 statement that 22 victims "were reportedly executed in a church compound where they had found shelter."

"This shows that the country is not safe, that Haiti is still a house on fire," Wenski said.

He added that "this should cause our administration to rethink its decision to send back into Haiti over 300,000 Haitians" currently in the U.S. under now-revoked Temporary Protected Status, or TPS.

The deportation protection, created by Congress as part of the Immigration Act of 1990, provides deportation protections for those from Homeland Security-designated countries experiencing ongoing crises, such as war and environmental disasters. More than 330,000 Haitians in the U.S. had TPS protection as of 2025.

On Aug. 5, U.S. District Court Judge Ana C. Reyes affirmed the Supreme Court's June ruling allowing the Trump administration to terminate the TPS designation for Haiti.

Wenski pointed to a recent bill before the Senate that, if passed, would extend TPS for Haiti through early 2029.

The legislation "would pass very easily" if President Donald Trump "would voice his support," said the archbishop.

He noted that the latest attack took place "in one of the nicer neighborhoods of Haiti," indicating that "the gangs are obviously taking control of that and terrorizing the population."

At the same time, Wenski said, the U.S. — which urges its own citizens not to travel to Haiti due to the risk of crime, kidnapping, terrorism and limited health care — is deporting Haitians to a country in which they will "be exposed to the violence of the gangs."

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"Haiti is a tragedy, and what we're doing is compounding it by trying to send these people back," he said.

The very process of deportation itself creates cascading suffering, he added.

With more than 300,000 Haitians in the U.S. now lacking deportation protections, "even if you send a couple of planes a week, it'll take several years before you are successful in deporting all those people," said the archbishop. "And what happens in the meantime is that they've lost their work permits, and they've lost their driver's licenses for the most part. So if they can't work, they can't pay their rent, they can't buy food."

Relatives in Haiti who depend upon remittances — earnings sent by migrant workers to support their families back home — will also be deprived of critical funds needed

to educate children in the Caribbean nation, he said.

"Those children will not be able to go to school, which even further complicates the situation on the ground in Haiti," said Wenski.

He said the Archdiocese of Miami had to "let go some 45 people that were on TPS, because we can't legally hire them when their work permit is removed."

"The idea is to make it miserable for them so that they go back to Haiti," said Wenski. "But there's really nothing there right now to go back to, except chaos and more pain and more suffering."

Wenski said that after the Aug. 23 attack he had spoken with Archbishop Max Leroy Méridor of Port-au-Prince, president of the Haitian Bishops' Conference.

The city of Port-au-Prince — about 90% of which is controlled by some 26 gangs, according to the U.N. — is "the Wild West," said Wenski.

He said Méridor confirmed "the majority of the gangs" are in the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince — but "the church has to continue its mission in good times and bad."

"And right now, these are very bad times for Haiti," said Wenski.

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. [View the full series.](#)