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Irish Aid Worker Among Nine Abducted in Gang Raid on Haitian Orphanage

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An Irish missionary was among nine individuals kidnapped from an orphanage near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in a targeted raid that has drawn international attention. The abduction

took place early Sunday morning at the Sainte-Hélène orphanage in the commune of Kenscoff, approximately 10 kilometres southeast of the Haitian capital.

Gena Heraty, a well-known Irish humanitarian, was taken alongside seven orphanage staff members and a three-year-old child. Heraty serves as the director of the facility, which is operated by the charity *Nos Petits Frères et Sœurs* (translated as “Our Little Brothers and Sisters”), a long-standing international organisation that provides support for vulnerable children.

According to Kenscoff Mayor Masillon Jean, the perpetrators breached the property by breaking through a wall at approximately 3:30 a.m. local time, avoiding gunfire and proceeding directly to the building where Heraty was staying. “They broke through a wall to enter the property before heading to the building where the director was staying, leaving with nine hostages,” Jean said, describing the act as clearly premeditated.

No ransom demands or conditions have been made public. However, a source close to the organisation told Agence France-Presse (AFP) that Heraty was able to make a phone call shortly after the incident to confirm her capture.

Heraty has lived in Haiti since 1993 and oversees the daily care of more than 270 children at the orphanage. Her dedication to the country and her work with children has earned her widespread recognition, including humanitarian awards in her native Ireland.

The situation is part of a broader pattern of worsening gang violence in Haiti. The region of Kenscoff has recently come under threat from the “Viv Ansanm” (“Living Together”) gang, which has already seized control of multiple nearby areas. The group is one of many criminal factions expanding their influence in the power vacuum left by Haiti’s weakening state institutions.

Gang-related violence and abductions have spiked in recent years. In 2021, the “400 Mawozo” gang was responsible for the high-profile kidnapping of 17 North American missionaries, including children. That group was also behind the earlier abduction of two French priests.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that at least 3,141 people have been killed in Haiti in the first six months of this year alone, as gang dominance continues to destabilise communities and obstruct humanitarian efforts.