

# European Conference on Drug-Related Violence

This presentation was delivered at the European Conference on Drug-Related Violence on 26-27 November 2024 in Brussels. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

# Addressing and Mitigating Drug-Related Violence in Fort-de-France



*Ville de Fort-de-France*

# Fort-de-France, Capital city

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Fort-de-France, located in Martinique, **is the administrative, economic, and political capital of the island**. With a population of 74,921 in 2021, the city is home to the island's main institutions, including the government, police, and courts. Its seaport and waterfront area, developed into a promenade, are significant economic assets.

Politically, Fort-de-France has been governed by the Martinican Progressive Party since 1945. It is part of the Community of Agglomeration of Central Martinique (CACEM), and the island is administered by the Territorial Collectivity of Martinique (CTM).



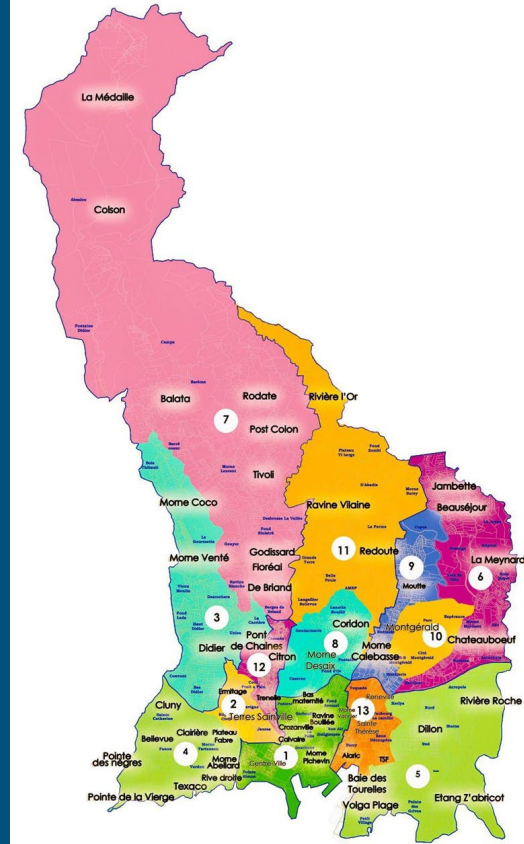
# Neighborhoods



Fort-de-France is an expansive city with diverse neighborhoods, some of which are characterized by aging large housing estates, informal settlements, and squats.

In Martinique, 44,300 households are below the poverty line, representing 27% of the regional population and 32% of children. **This poverty rate is nearly twice as high as the metropolitan rate (14.4%).**

- 50% of the island's prison population comes from Fort-de-France
- 30% of the properties are vacant.
- Nearly 3,000 Haitian illegal immigrants live in the area



# Drugs and Violence

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In 2022, **75% of the cocaine received in France came from the French Caribbean**. The French Caribbean are on the front lines of the threat of "Mexicanization."

## Key statistics

- \* Over **28 tons of cocaine were intercepted since January 1, 2024**, compared to 11 tons in 2023.
- \* Over the last 5 years in Fort-de-France, there have been **more than 100 murders by firearm and more than 400 attempted Gun-related murders**.

# Firearms trafficking

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- \* **More than 278 firearms were seized during law enforcement operations** in 2022 (origin: Venezuela and the USA, sold via the internet to residents of Saint Lucia).
- \* For over 5 years, **French Guiana, Martinique, and Guadeloupe have ranked as the most crime-prone territories in France**, surpassing even the city of Marseille.



# Drugs, Firearms, and Violence

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## KEY STATISTICS AND ACTIONS BY ELECTED OFFICIALS :

- \* In Martinique, **security forces face five times more violence than in mainland France** (source: General Vaquette, Gendarmerie Commander).
- \* **One kilogram of cocaine, sold wholesale, costs €3,000 here, compared to over €30,000 on the mainland.**
- \* **No customs or maritime declaration is required to dock or land on the coasts of Martinique**, except for the two ports of Fort-de-France and Le Marin (requiring a declaration since July 2024).
- \* **Elected officials and parliamentarians are taking action for over 10 years with the French state, which remained unresponsive** until 2022. Narcotrafficking and the associated violence have continued to rise.
- \* Finally, in 2024, a parliamentary report highlighted the **inadequacy of resources and the insufficiency of the state's security policies in the French Caribbean and French Guiana** for years.

# Cocaine and Cannabis Trade

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Cocaine and cannabis resin trafficking represents a **very significant underground economy**.

Martinique has become an **important hub between the coasts of Suriname, France, Europe, and North Africa** (transit, trading, storage, and distribution by sea, air, and postal services to small and medium-sized towns in France).



# Insufficient Specialized Facilities and Medical Professionals

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**Nearly 500 homeless individuals addicted to crack have no access to healthcare.**

- There is a lack of specialized facilities and medical professionals
- The homeless become more violent towards passersby when they are in crisis.



# MITIGATING VIOLENCE AND RECRUITMENT BY STRENGTHENING CONTROL MEASURES

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## Proposed Solutions :

- \* **Reinforce human resources** for OFAST (Anti-Drug Office), the Judiciary, and Customs.
- \* Develop **alternative control strategies within the territories and along the coastal areas** (drones, coastal radars, maritime patrols).
- \* **Enhance airport controls and logistics platforms** such as the postal service with cutting-edge systems.
- \* **Transfer the “top drug traffickers” out of the territory** to prevent local recruitment in prisons.
- \* **Establish stronger police-justice cooperation** with English-speaking islands such as Saint Lucia and Dominica.



# MITIGATING VIOLENCE AND RECRUITMENT BY STRENGTHENING CONTROL MEASURES

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## Proposed Solutions :

- \* **Make the french Caribbean and french Guiana an impermeable European border** to the cocaine route to Europe
- \* **Fight against economic and financial crime** linked to drug and arms trafficking
- \* **Change the intervention procedures for the gendarmes in international waters** to arrest drug traffickers in flagrant offense.
- \* Establish a **more intense cooperation between European ports and those in the French Caribbean and french Guiana**
- \* Implement a **maritime arrival declaration requirement** for those entering the territory

# How does the city of Fort-de-France contribute to addressing violence ?

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## Strengthening specialized prevention and mediation efforts

- The intervention of **specialized prevention teams** and **street educators** (12 agents) aims to :
  - \* Calm neighborhoods most exposed to juvenile delinquency,
  - \* Engage with young people voluntarily and re-motivate those who are furthest from institutional structures.

However, this team is limited to priority geographical areas (22,000 inhabitants). Despite its success, French state funding for this initiative will end in 2024.

- Development of **cohesion activities and support for parenting**
- Support to the **associations involved in the prevention of youth radicalization and criminality.**

# How does the city of Fort-de-France contribute to addressing violence ?

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## Prevent radicalization and criminality among young people

- \* Strengthening **prevention in schools and middle schools.**
- \* Intervention of **prevention teams and street educators to ease tensions**
- \* Development of **citizen networks and mobilization for collective actions** that enhance neighborhoods
- \* **Cooperation with the judiciary and local anti-delinquency treatment groups** for sensitive neighborhoods

# How does the city of Fort-de-France contribute to addressing violence ?

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## Preventing youth disconnection

- \* Combating **school drop-out**
- \* Prevention of **addictions**
- \* Strengthening **educational ties and promoting professional and civic integration**
- \* Development of **cultural cohesion activities**
- \* Support and **mobilization of parents** (dismantling the "Bad Boy" model).
- \* Facilitating **youth engagement in apprenticeships**.

# How could Fort-de-France improve its contribution to addressing violence?

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- \* **Strengthening prevention and social mediation teams throughout the territory**, potentially Financed by the European Social Fund + (ESF+) as an innovation.
- \* Strengthening **professional and civic integration efforts**, prioritizing support for the School Enrollment Monitoring Team (ESS) for young people (priority 7 of the ESF+ dedicated to French overseas departments).
- \* **Co-financing apprenticeship initiatives** in public communities with identified needs.
- \* Developing **cohesion activities** and parenting support
- \* Expanding **citizen networks** and dialogue with **law enforcement**
- \* Improving **cooperation with neighboring countries' justice systems** (murders committed by Saint Lucians in Martinique, motorcycle and boat thefts to go back to their country).