Refugee Protection Division

Commission de l'immigration et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Section de la protection des réfugiés

RPD File No. / Nº de dossier de la SPR: MB9-18414

MB9-18439 / MB9-18469 / MB9-18471

Private Proceeding / Huis clos

Reasons and Decision - Motifs et décision

Claimant(s)	XXXX XXXX XXXXXXXX XXXX XXXX XXXXXXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX	Demandeur(e)(s) d'asile
Date(s) of hearing	September 18, 2020	Date(s) de l'audience
Place of hearing	Montréal, Quebec	Lieu de l'audience
Date of decision and reasons	October 1, 2020	Date de la décision et des motifs
Panel	Darius Constantin	Tribunal
Counsel for the claimant(s)	M ^e Majorie Demeulenaere	Conseil(s) du (de la/des) demandeur(e)(s) d'asile
Designated representative	XXXX XXXX	Représentant(e) désigné(e)
Counsel for the Minister	N/A	Conseil du (de la) ministre



REASONS FOR DECISION

INTRODUCTION

- [1] The adult claimants, **XXXX XXXX** and his spouse, **XXXX XXXX XXXX**, are citizens of the Republic of Haiti, while their children, **XXXX XXXX XXXX** and **XXXX XXXX XXXX**, are citizens of Venezuela. They are arguing that they are "Convention refugees" and "persons in need of protection" under section 96 and subsection 97(1) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA).
- [2] The male claimant was appointed the designated representative of his children, who were minors on the date of the hearing.

ALLEGATIONS

- [3] The adult claimants state that they met and started a family in Venezuela, where they had both obtained permanent resident status. Due to the economic and social crisis affecting the country, as well as racist incidents, they made the decision to return to Haiti, where they settled, on XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017.
- [4] Once back in Haiti, the claimants opened a small shop. They allege that on XXXX XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017, at around midnight, a group of criminals broke into their shop. They were victims of abuse: the male claimant was held up at gunpoint and beaten, and the criminals attempted to rape the female claimant. The male claimant's younger brother, who stood up to the criminals, was abducted.
- [5] The criminals threatened to kill the male claimant if he went to the police. The male claimant went to the police anyway to report his younger brother's abduction.
- [6] Three days after this incident, the criminals returned to the area and shot at the front of the male claimant's mother's home, which also housed their shop.
- [7] On XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017, the claimants fled Haiti for Chile. They fear that if they return to the country, they will be killed by the criminals who targeted them.

[8] The male claimant states further that his mother and younger brother have been receiving threats from a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation, which his family left in 2006 to join a Baptist congregation.

DETERMINATION

[9] The panel determines that the claimants are neither "Convention refugees" nor "persons in need of protection" for the following reasons.

ANALYSIS

Identity

[10] The claimants allege that their passports were seized by the US authorities when they entered the United States, which they transited through before entering Canada. However, clear colour copies of the claimants' passports were seized when they entered Canada. Based on this evidence and the claimants' testimony, the panel concludes that they established their respective identities on a balance of probabilities.

Nexus to the Convention and applicable legal framework

[11] The male claimant testified that he thought that the Jehovah's Witnesses congregation that had been threatening his family was behind the attack on his shop. If this were the case, the panel would see a nexus between the allegations in this claim and one of the grounds of persecution set out in the Convention, namely religion. When the panel asked the male claimant to provide his reasons for believing that the attack was linked to the Jehovah's Witnesses, he explained that they had been threatening the family, including his younger brother adducted during the attack, who was a very good preacher, leading him to believe that it was the Jehovah's Witnesses who had attacked them.

[12] The panel considers this theory to be purely speculative. The male claimant did not recognize his assailants, who wore masks. He had recently opened a shop in a country where

Document 1 – Information package provided by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and/or Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): Passports.

robbery is widespread.² In this context, the panel cannot conclude on a balance of probabilities that the agents of risk who targeted the claimants were motivated by a religious rivalry. The attack could just as easily have been motivated by greed.

- [13] The panel does not see a nexus between the allegations concerning the attack on the shop and one of the Convention grounds and will consequently analyze this aspect of the claim under subsection 97(1) of the IRPA.
- [14] The female claimant alleges further that she fears being a victim of rape if she were to return to Haiti. This aspect of the claim, which concerns membership in the particular social group of women, will be analyzed under section 96 of the IRPA.

Exclusion 1E

- [15] The claimants alleged that they had obtained permanent resident status in Venezuela. The panel analyzed the possibility of their exclusion under Article 1E of the Convention and section 98 of the IRPA.
- [16] The claimants stated that they thought they had lost their permanent resident status in Venezuela, which they left more than three years ago, by reason of this absence. They stated that they did not have specific information in this regard but thought they had lost their status. To support this claim, counsel for the claimants cited a Response to Information Request (RIR) published by this panel in 2003³ indicating that residents of Venezuela lose their status after an absence of more than two years from the country. Based on more recent information, however, a resident does not lose status from being absent from Venezuela. To this end:

The representative of the UNHCR in Venezuela explains that Haitians with residency status do not lose it if they leave Venezuela, but that it "affects the time of continuous residency needed to apply for Venezuelan nationality," and that in the case of Haitian

Document 3 – National Documentation Package (NDP) on Haiti, September 1, 2020, Tab 7.1: Response to Information Request, HTI106116.FE, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), June 19, 2018.

Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Venezuela: Information on obtaining permanent resident status, and the rights associated with that status*, 31 December 2003, VEN42273.E, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/403dd2790.html [accessed 25 September 2020].

citizens, it is five years of continuous residency (UN 9 Mar. 2018). The same source states that Venezuelan law does not indicate "reasons to lose the residency status" (UN 9 Mar. 2018). Similarly, according to the retired professor, the Venezuelan resident visa has no restrictions on whether a person may travel outside Venezuela (Retired Professor 27 Feb. 2018).⁴

[17] The panel gives greater weight to this information which, unlike the RIR cited in the submissions, is part of the National Documentation Package (NDP) on Venezuela. It is to be noted that the claimants' position, namely that they thought they had lost their permanent resident status in the country, is founded solely on their presumption that being absent from the country results in such loss, a presumption contradicted by the objective evidence. Regardless, the presumption that the claimants are still permanent residents of Venezuela, based on their allegation that they were at one time, could only be rebutted by convincing evidence, not by uncertainty.⁵

[18] The panel concludes that the adult claimants were, on the date of the hearing, permanent residents of Venezuela.

[19] The claimants allege that they faced discrimination and racism in Venezuela. According to a recent line of authority, the analysis to determine whether the claimants would face persecution in the country is "unnecessary and not determinative" before this panel and would be done instead in the event of a pre-removal risk assessment. A recent decision stipulates that it would even be an error in law to conduct such an analysis. However, in another recent decision, Justice Shore of the Federal Court disagrees with both of these decisions and concludes that, in accordance with case law that predates both of these decisions, the risk in the 1E country should be analyzed before ruling on the exclusion. Therefore, there are currently two opposing lines of authority on this matter. In light of this finding, the panel chose to follow the traditional course of assessing the risk

Document 3 – NDP on Haiti, September 1, 2020, Tab 3.12: Response to Information Request, ZZZ106067.FE, IRB, June 4, 2018.

⁵ *Mwano v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2020 FC 792, at para. 15.

⁶ Celestin v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), (F.C., No. IMM-977-19), Pamel, January 22, 2020, 2020 FC 97, at para. 71.

⁷ Saint-Paul, 2020 FC 493.

⁸ *Mwano*, 2020 FC 792, at paras. 23–26.

in the 1E country, which is the same reasoning applied numerous times by the Federal Court, particularly in *Omar*. ⁹ To this end:

As was noted earlier, the purpose of Article 1E is to exclude persons who do not need protection under the Refugee Convention. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee notes in the "Note on the Interpretation of Article 1E of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", regard must also be had to whether the individual has a well-founded fear of persecution in the country where the individual has been granted refugee protection. This makes sense: if it were otherwise, an individual in Mr. Omar's position would be denied refugee protection in Canada, while a citizen of South Africa facing the same risk would be entitled to refugee protection.

- [20] The panel will therefore analyze the claimants' fear in Venezuela before ruling on their exclusion.
- [21] The claimants allege that they were discriminated against in Venezuela by reason of their Haitian origin. In the context of the food crisis affecting the country, they were reportedly excluded from food distribution lines on multiple occasions by individuals accusing them of coming to steal their food and calling for assistance from the soldiers supervising the distribution, who invariably took the native citizens' side. The children were also allegedly mistreated at school by both teachers and students, who made racist comments regarding the colour of their skin.
- [22] According to the documentary evidence, Venezuela is clearly going through a crisis that is leading to problems including food shortages. ¹⁰ Soldiers and police in that country are also known for their arbitrary conduct toward immigrant communities. ¹¹ In light of this evidence and the claimants' testimony, the panel considers, on a balance of probabilities, that they were treated as alleged in Venezuela.

⁹ *Omar*, 2017 FC 458, at para. 24.

Document 3 – NDP on Venezuela, March 31, 2020, Tab 2.11: *Venezuela's Humanitarian Emergency: Large-Scale UN Response Needed to Address Health and Food Crises*, Human Rights Watch, April 4, 2019.

Document 3 – NDP on Venezuela, March 31, 2020, Tab 10.2: *Unchecked Power, Police and Military Raids in Low-Income and Immigrant Communities in Venezuela*, Human Rights Watch, April 4, 2016.

[23] The panel concludes that the claimants faced repeated discriminatory treatment in Venezuela that cumulatively amounts to persecution. The panel consequently concludes that the claimants are not excluded under Article 1E of the Convention and section 98 of the IRPA.

Credibility

Events of attack on shop and abduction of male claimant's younger brother

[24] The panel asked the male claimant to describe the events at his shop culminating in his younger brother's abduction. The male claimant responded that he was not entirely sure of what happened because he had been knocked down by the criminals and had his head pressed into the floor by someone's foot. As a result, he was unable to state whether his brother had problems with the criminals or what occurred to lead to his abduction.

[25] However, in his Basis of Claim Form (BOC Form), the male claimant states: [translation] "My brother wanted to fight with them, he was trying to break free." When asked to explain the contradiction between these two versions, that the male claimant does not know why his brother was abducted, when he states in his BOC Form that his brother resisted and was then abducted, the male claimant explained that there were slight differences between his testimony and the BOC Form because he went into greater detail in his testimony.

[26] The panel rejects this explanation as unreasonable. The male claimant did not go into greater detail but rather gave a different version of the sequence of events, and with less detail than in the written allegations in that the male claimant did not go on to explain why his younger brother was abducted.

[27] Meanwhile, in his port-of-entry interview on the record, 12 the male claimant states that his younger brother was abducted by the criminals because he [translation] "started talking back to them." The panel did not confront the male claimant concerning this detail, which it noted during its deliberations. However, this is clearly a statement made by the male claimant giving a third explanation as to the reason for his younger brother's abduction, which cannot logically be reconciled with the testimony that the male claimant does not know what happened.

Document 1 – Information package provided by the CBSA and/or IRCC: Statutory declaration at the port of entry.

[28] Due to the contradictions concerning the circumstances of the abduction, the panel concludes that it has not been established, on a balance of probabilities, that the male claimant's younger brother was abducted.

Return of the criminals three days after attack

- [29] In his BOC Form, the male claimant alleges that the criminals returned to the site of the attack three days after the attack of XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017, and shot at the door of the building that houses both his mother's home and his shop.
- [30] At the hearing, the panel asked the male claimant if he had any other issues following the attack of XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017, and the male claimant responded that, after that date, he left the area and moved to Pétion-Ville. The panel then asked whether any of his family members had issues, and the male claimant replied: [translation] "I don't have any other family; after it happened, my mother went to Santo Domingo." The panel then confronted the male claimant concerning his BOC Form, in which he recounts the shots fired at the door of the building three days after the initial event. When asked to explain this contradiction, the male claimant attributed it to possible confusion, stating that he had misunderstood the panel's question.
- [31] The panel rejects this explanation. It had just asked two easily understandable questions in an effort to have the male claimant describe what happened after XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017. The male claimant did not spontaneously mention any gunshots, when this is a central aspect of his refugee protection claim insofar as it is the only evidence that the criminals were still interested in the male claimant after breaking into his shop.
- [32] The panel concludes that it has not been established, on a balance of probabilities, that the criminals returned to shoot at the male claimant's shop three days after they broke into it.

Inconsistent behaviour – Failure to seek asylum in Chile

[33] The claimants went to Chile on XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017. The male claimant obtained temporary resident status there as a worker, as appears in a photograph of the annotation added to

his passport,¹³ whereas the female claimant did not obtain any status apart from visitor status. The claimants did not apply for asylum in Chile.

[34] When asked to explain why they failed to seek asylum in Chile, the claimants testified that Chileans exhibited racist behaviours there. The male claimant testified that, on multiple occasions, Chileans stood up rather than remain seated next to them on public transit and that they frequently made unpleasant comments about them in Spanish.

[35] While these incidents are discriminatory and unfortunate, the panel concludes that they do not reach the threshold of persecution. Although it was no doubt psychologically distressing to hear derogatory comments, the claimants were not assaulted or threatened with harm, nor were their basic rights violated.

[36] The panel concludes that the failure to claim asylum in Chile is behaviour that is inconsistent with that of persons who fear for their lives, and it draws a negative inference as to the claimants' credibility.

Credibility finding

[37] The panel believes that the claimants opened a shop in Haiti that was broken into on XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017. However, the panel concludes that it has not been established, on a balance of probabilities, that the criminals subsequently returned to seek revenge for a police complaint having been filed. Therefore, the claimants have not proved, on a balance of probabilities, that the event was anything other than a random crime or that the criminals are still interested in them. The allegations concerning the event of XXXX XXXX XXXX 2017, consequently cannot be used to support their refugee protection claims.

Fear based on status as members of the Haitian diaspora

[38] The claimants allege further that they fear returning to the country as members of the Haitian diaspora. They allege that since they have lived for a long time abroad, they will be perceived as wealthy and will be at risk of having a family member kidnapped or killed. In her

Document 6 – Evidence of status in Chile.

submissions, counsel for the claimants cites the new Tab 14.1 of the NDP, ¹⁴ which purports to demonstrate the risk faced by members of the diaspora returning to Haiti.

[39] It is true that this document indicates that persons returning from North America are, in the collective imagination, perceived as having money and may consequently be targeted. However, according to the same document, there is often no easy way to know that someone is a returnee, which certainly mitigates the risk factor. To this end:

In an interview with the Research Directorate, a Haitian human rights lawyer stated that people returning from abroad are not automatically categorized as such by society in general, because there is no way for their fellow citizens to know that they are returnees, unless there is media coverage; according to him, any [translation] "indexing" is only by their inner circle (Lawyer 17 June 2020).

[40] Additionally, according to the documentary evidence, violent crime is endemic in Haiti and can randomly affect any citizen in the country regardless of whether they are members of the diaspora returning to the country. The case law is clear that being a victim of crime does not constitute a ground of persecution within the meaning of section 96 of the IRPA.¹⁵ Similarly, a generalized risk of crime affecting the entire population of a country is not enough to ground a claim under subparagraph 97(1)(b)(ii) of the IRPA.¹⁶

[41] Moreover, as Justice Tremblay-Lamer instructs in *Prophète*: ¹⁷

In the recent case of *Carias v Canada (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration)*, 2007 FC 602, [2007] F.C.J. No. 817 (QL), at paras. 23 and 25, O'Keefe J. concluded that the applicants faced a generalized risk of economic crime which was experienced by many other Hondurans, including those perceived as wealthy. In that particular case, the Board accepted that the applicants had been the victims of violence, however, O'Keefe J. dismissed the application indicating, at para. 25, that

Document 3 – NDP on Haiti, September 1, 2020, Tab 10.4: Response to Information Request, HTI106202.FE, IRB, November 15, 2018.

Lozandier v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), 2009 FC 770; Jean, Léonie Laurore v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), 2010 FC 674.

Prophète v. Canada (Citizenship and Immigration), 2008 FC 331, 2009 FCA 31; Lamour, Nathalie v. M.C.I.
(2011 FC 322), Montigny, March 17, 2011.

Prophète, Ralph v. M.C.I (F.C., No. IMM-3077-07), Tremblay-Lamer, March 12, 2008; 2008 FC 331, at para. 23, confirmed by Prophète, Ralph v. M.C.I. (F.C.A., No. A-168-08) Létourneau, Blais, Trudel, February 4, 2009, 2009 FCA 31.

"[t]he applicants are members of a large group of people who may be targeted for economic crimes in Honduras on basis of their perceived wealth." Further, he held that "[g]iven the wording of subparagraph 97(1)(b)(ii) of the IRPA, the applicants had to satisfy the Board that they would be personally subjected to a risk that was not generally faced by others in Honduras."

Based on the recent jurisprudence of this Court, I am of the view that the applicant does not face a personalized risk that is not faced generally by other individuals in or from Haiti. The risk of all forms of criminality is general and felt by all Haitians. While a specific number of individuals may be targeted more frequently because of their wealth, all Haitians are at risk of becoming the victims of violence.¹⁸

- [42] Meanwhile, in *Jean*,¹⁹ the Federal Court indicates that "the diaspora as a whole cannot be considered a [translation] 'risk group' and that each case must be considered individually and within [translation] 'its own context."
- [43] Clearly, in the case at hand, there is no basis to conclude that the claimants would be singled out from any other Haitians who are perceived as wealthy or otherwise targeted.
- [44] For this reason, the panel is of the view that the claimants have failed to establish, on a balance of probabilities, that if they were to return to Haiti, they would, by reason of their status as persons repatriated from a foreign country, face a risk different in nature or degree from that faced generally by other Haitians.

Female claimant's fear as a member of the particular social group of women

- [45] The female claimant alleges further that she fears being raped if she were to return to Haiti. The panel analyzed this aspect of her claim under section 96 of the IRPA. The panel also considered *Guideline 4: Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution*.²⁰
- [46] The female claimant testified alongside her spouse at the hearing. According to counsel, there is no guarantee that their conjugal relationship will last indefinitely or provide protection to the female claimant. With all due respect, the panel considers this claim to be purely speculative. The claimants have been together for years and made a home together, notably as the parents to

Prophète, Ralph v. M.C.I. (F.C., No. IMM-3077-07), Tremblay-Lamer, March 12, 2008; 2008 FC 331, at paras. 23 and 24, confirmed by Prophète, Ralph v. M.C.I. (F.C.A., No. A-168-08) Létourneau, Blais, Trudel, February 4, 2009, 2009 FCA 31.

Jean, Léonie Laurore v. M.C.I. (F.C., No. IMM-5860-09) June 22, 2010, 2010 FC 674.

IRB. Guideline 4: *Women Refugee Claimants Fearing Gender-Related Persecution*. Guideline issued by the Board pursuant to subsection 65(3) of the *Immigration Act*. Effective November 13, 1996.

three children. As of the date of the hearing, there is nothing to lead the panel to conclude, on a balance of probabilities, that the female claimant's relationship with her spouse will not continue. The availability of male protection is a factor that mitigates the risk of becoming a victim of gender-based violence in Haiti, and the panel concludes that the female claimant, who lives with her spouse, has this protection.

[47] Moreover, according to the documentary evidence, a significant proportion of the sexual violence Haitian women may be subjected to is violence perpetrated by a spouse or former partner. The female claimant did not allege fearing such violence, and the panel concludes from this that the female claimant is safe in her conjugal relationship.

[48] The female claimant alleges further that she would be in a precarious situation if she were to return to Haiti, notably because she has not finished secondary school, which would make it difficult to find employment. However, the female claimant has a job in Montréal, which means that she would be able to offer work experience, and in the past she also ran a business with her spouse. The panel consequently concludes that the female claimant has not established, on a balance of probabilities, that she would be left jobless or homeless if she were to return to Haiti.

[49] At the same time, the female claimant also alleges that as a member of the Haitian diaspora, she would be perceived as wealthy. Logically, this means that she has set aside some money to support her reintegration into Haitian society. In other words, the panel does not understand how the female claimant can allege, on the one hand, that her profile would cause her to be perceived as wealthy and make her vulnerable in this regard, and on the other hand, that she would be left disadvantaged to the point that she would be in a situation similar to that of women living in camps for displaced persons who are, in various documents, designated as particularly vulnerable to sexual violence due to their precarious situation.²¹ The panel is of the opinion, on a balance of

Document 3 – NDP on Haiti, March 29, 2019, Tab 5.3: Response to Information Request HTI105161.FE, IRB, December 15, 2016;

Document 3 – NDP on Haiti, September 1, 2020, Tab 5.9: *Violence against Women, Trafficking, Prostitution, and Exploitation by UN Peacekeepers*, Bureau des Avocats Internationaux et al., January 22, 2016;

Document 3 – NDP on Haiti, September 1, 2020, Tab 5.12: *Haiti : Les violences faites aux femmes*, France, Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides, January 9, 2017.

probabilities, that the female claimant would not have this profile of a woman particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

- [50] Lastly, the panel notes that the female claimant did not apply for asylum in Chile, which, for the reasons set out above, was not reasonably justified. In the component of the claim based on absence in the particular social group of women, under section 96 of the IRPA, this denotes the absence of a subjective fear.
- [51] Membership in the particular social group of women is an insufficient basis to conclude that the female claimant would face a serious possibility of persecution if she were to return to Haiti. As noted by Justice Pinard in *Dezameau*:²²

This is not to say that membership in a particular social group is sufficient to result in a finding of persecution. The evidence provided by the applicant must still satisfy the Board that there is a risk of harm which is sufficiently serious and whose occurrence is "more than a mere possibility".

Minor children's refugee protection claims

- [52] The claimants testified that their children were mistreated at school in Venezuela by reason of their skin colour and foreign origin. The panel considers that this treatment cumulatively amounts to persecution. As such, the minor children have demonstrated there is a well-founded fear in Venezuela.
- [53] However, as children of Haitian citizens, the minor claimants are Haitian citizens *jus sanguinis* and may claim this citizenship by completing certain administrative formalities.²³
- [54] The panel consequently concludes that the children could accompany their parents to Haiti, a country where they would not face a risk different in nature or degree from that faced generally by the Haitian population.
- [55] After analyzing all of the evidence, the panel concludes that there is no serious possibility that the claimants would be persecuted in Haiti or that, on a balance of probabilities, they would

²² Dezameau, Elmancia v. M.C.I. (F.C., No. IMM-4396-09), Pinard, May 27, 2010; 2010 FC 559.

Document 3 – NDP on Haiti, September 1, 2020, Tab 3.1: Response to Information Request, HTI104293.E, IRB, February 8, 2013.

be subjected to a danger of torture, to a risk to their lives to or a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

CONCLUSION

- [57] Consequently, the panel rejects their refugee protection claims.

Darius Constantin
Darius Constantin
October 1, 2020
Date

IRB translation

Original language: French