

[Home](#) [Country of Origin Information](#) Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) are research reports on country conditions. They are requested by IRB decision makers.

The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIR. Earlier RIR may be found on the [UNHCR's Refworld website](#).

Please note that some RIR have attachments which are not electronically accessible here. To obtain a copy of an attachment, [please e-mail us](#).

Related Links

- [Advanced search help](#)

29 November 2018

HTI106204.FE

Haiti: Whether Haitians who have lived abroad for a long time are at risk if they return to the country; the kinds of risks they might face; whether their return could represent a threat to their families and, if so, what kind of threat their families would face and from whom (2015-November 2018)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Targets of Crime

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a coordinator of the Support Group for Repatriates and Refugees (Groupe d'appui aux rapatriés et réfugiés, GARR) [1] stated that Haitians who return to Haiti after living abroad for a long time do not face any specific risks solely because they are returning to the country (GARR 14 Nov. 2018). Sociology professor Jean Eddy Saint Paul [2] also stated, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, that although one cannot

say without [translation] “exaggerating” that anyone who returns to or who is deported to Haiti after living in the United States or Canada for a long time is “typified” or “indexed” by thugs, the risk of being targeted by criminals is “real” and, for those returning to large cities (Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, Gonaïves, Cayes, Jérémie, Jacmel, Hinche) or areas in their vicinity, “high” (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a program director at the National Human Rights Defense Network (Réseau national de défense des droits humains, RNDDH) [3] also stated that people returning to the country are [translation] “neither automatically nor systematically targeted,” but they “are at risk of being victims if the people around them are aware of the fact that they are returning from abroad” and believe them to have a lot of money (RNDDH 27 Nov. 2018).

Sources explained that people who return to Haiti face risks because they are perceived as being wealthy or as having access to money (RNDDH 27 Nov. 2018; Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018; Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018; ICDH 15 Nov. 2018; GARR 14 Nov. 2018). GARR reported that returnees arriving, for example, from the Dominican Republic, are considered individuals who [translation] “have nothing,” but those coming back from the United States, Canada or France are perceived as returning with money (GARR 14 Nov. 2018). Jean Eddy Saint Paul explained the following:

[translation]

Much of the Haitian population believes that a person living in the diaspora (*yon dyaspora*), that is, someone who has lived outside the country, has considerable economic capital (*se yon moun ki gen lajan*). ... Although that is pure fiction, it does not keep bandits and criminals from believing that those who have lived abroad, even for a relatively short time, have a lot of money. (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018, italics in the original)

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a Haitian human rights lawyer and co-director of the Advocates Plus (Défenseurs Plus) [4] collective noted that people who spend time around Toussaint-Louverture International Airport are targeted by criminals, because the latter perceive them as having returned from abroad and as having access to money (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the director of the Citizens’ Initiative for Human Rights (Initiative citoyenne pour les droits de l’homme, ICDH) [5] similarly reported that [translation] “to address the lack of security” around the international airport, the

authorities stopped motorbike traffic in that area approximately one year ago, because the people who were killed upon their return from abroad were killed by people on motorbikes (ICDH 16 Nov. 2018). An article from a Haitian news website reports that on 4 April 2018, Haiti's National Police launched an operation to reduce crime around Toussaint-Louverture International Airport, [translation] "where many attacks on travellers have been registered in recent days," notably by controlling motorbike traffic, with motorbikes being prohibited around the airport (Rezo Nòdwès 4 Apr. 2018).

GARR noted that the risk of being targeted by criminals for one's perceived wealth is faced daily in Haiti by anyone who carries out income-generating activities (GARR 14 Nov. 2018). Sources reported that the risks faced by people returning from abroad who are considered wealthy include kidnapping and/or being held for ransom, murder (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018; Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018; GARR 16 Nov. 2018) and robbery (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018; GARR 16 Nov. 2018). The ICDH also stated that they could be subjected to threats, in addition to being robbed or killed (ICDH 16 Nov. 2018). For further information on the risks faced by people who are considered wealthy in Haiti, see Response to Information Request HTI106116 of June 2018.

Regarding individuals who go after people returning to the country, sources stated that they may include people with ties to armed groups or gangs (RNDDH 27 Nov. 2018; Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018; GARR 16 Nov. 2018; ICDH 16 Nov. 2018). Sources reported that they could also be people close to the victim (GARR 16 Nov. 2018; ICDH 16 Nov. 2018), such as members of their family or friends (GARR 16 Nov. 2018). The lawyer added that they could also simply be petty thieves (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018). GARR explained that those individuals could be from [translation] "any category," that they could be from "working-class" but also "residential" neighbourhoods, and that accomplices are found among entrepreneurs and the authorities, notably the police (GARR 16 Nov. 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. For information on criminality in Haiti, notably kidnappings for ransom, see Response to Information Request HTI106116 of June 2018.

1.1 Families of Returnees

Regarding the risks faced by the families of returnees, GARR reported that there has [translation] “never been a case registered” where a family was attacked because one of its members was a returnee (GARR 16 Nov. 2018). The same source noted that sometimes a member of a family that is considered wealthy is kidnapped for extortion purposes, but that that could happen to any family and is not related to the return to the country of one of its members (GARR 16 Nov. 2018). For its part, the ICDH explained that sometimes the family of a person returning from abroad is targeted because of their perceived wealth, but not often (ICDH 16 Nov. 2018). However, according to Jean Eddy Saint Paul, family members may be targeted by crime, notably kidnapping, [translation] “which is currently common in Haiti,” “if the [repatriated] immigrants have to live in the same household” because the returnee would be perceived as “wealthy” and “able to pay the ransom to free a household member” (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018). According to the lawyer, the family members of returnees are [translation] “sometimes” kidnapped for the purpose of extorting money from the returnees, who are considered to be wealthy (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018). Without providing further details, the same source stated that some families have had to move to other neighbourhoods to avoid those risks upon the return of a family member (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018).

2. Discrimination

Jean Eddy Saint Paul reported that a returnee or deported person may, in Haiti, be perceived as [translation] “‘a deportee,’ synonym for an undesirable or even criminal element in the country that sent them back” and that they can be “stigmatized,” “discriminated against” or “marginalized” for that reason (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018). He also explained that, [translation] “generally,” deportation is “very poorly perceived by society in Haiti” and is associated with “criminal[s]” and, notably to “crimes related to using or selling drugs” (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018). The RNDDH similarly stated that deportees are [translation] “the subject of discriminatory acts in the country,” that they are “considered criminals, with society tending to believe that they were involved in the perpetration of reprehensible acts or that they missed their chance of ‘making a life for themselves,’” and so, they are “marginalized” (RNDDH 27 Nov. 2018). Jean Eddy Saint Paul added that [translation] “[a] good number [of

deportees who return to Haiti] remain forced to live on the fringes of society and [that] their children are subject to harassment at school, as ‘children of deportees’ [*pitit depòte*, in Haitian Creole]” (Saint Paul 19 Nov. 2018).

3. Specific Groups

3.1 Women

According to sources, women who return to Haiti are at risk of sexual or gender-based violence (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018; University of Miami School of Law and University of Chicago Law School 2015, xi). Human Rights Watch similarly reports that [Human Rights Watch English version] “[g]ender-based violence is a widespread problem” in Haiti (Human Rights Watch 2018).

According to a study published in 2015 on the deportation of Haitians with criminal records that was conducted by the immigration and human rights clinics of the University of Miami School of Law and the University of Chicago Law School, between 2010 and 2012, approximately 70 percent of Haitian women and girls experienced some form of gender-based violence (University of Miami School of Law et University of Chicago Law School 2015, 30). Sources report that Haiti’s legal system does not provide adequate protections for women (University of Miami School of Law and University of Chicago Law School 2015, 31) and that Haiti has no specific legislation against domestic violence, sexual harassment, or other forms of violence against women (Human Rights Watch 2018). The 2015 study on the deportation of Haitians reports that Haitian women do not turn to the justice system because they have little faith in it (University of Miami School of Law and University of Chicago Law School 2015, 30-31).

According to the lawyer, a woman kidnapped for ransom would also be at risk of sexual violence while being held against her will (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018). With regard to the Haitians who have been deported from the Dominican Republic since 2015 [6], the United Nations Human Rights Council reports, without providing further details, that women are [UN English version] “particularly vulnerable” and are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking and “transactional sexual exploitation ... and various forms of bonded labour” (UN 15 May 2018, para. 63).

3.2 Sexual Minorities

Sources also reported that members of sexual minorities face greater risks upon returning to Haiti (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018; University of Miami School of Law and University of Chicago Law School 2015, 32) because Haitian society rejects them (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018). According to the same sources, people who are members of sexual minorities are rejected in Haiti on account of the population's conservative religious values (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018) or a pervasive hetero-normative societal attitude in Haiti (University of Miami School of Law and University of Chicago Law School 2015, 32). A report on a mission in Haiti by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides, OFPRA), which was conducted in March and April 2017, states that, according to the president of Kouraj, a Haitian activist LGBT NGO (Kouraj n.d.), physical attacks against people from sexual minorities are [translation] "frequent" in underprivileged areas, where "even the mere suspicion of homosexuality may trigger violence" (France 2017, 70). The president of Kouraj, according to the same source and without providing further details, also reported that [translation] "LGBTI persons who are members of certain privileged social classes may be subject only to discrimination, and not to violence" (France 2017, 70). The same source, referring to statements made by the director of the Sérovie foundation, a Haitian community organization that offers psychological support to people affected by HIV and vocational training for young Haitians who are members of sexual minorities (Fondation Sérovie n.d.), indicates that the Haitian authorities do not [translation] "generally" respond when faced with violent acts against individuals who are sexual minorities (France 2017, 68).

According to the lawyer, only famous people, who advocate for the rights of sexual minorities and who are protected by their fame, face less risk; others are marginalized and subject to [translation] "huge risks" (Lawyer 19 Nov. 2018). OFPRA's mission report states that the population of some provincial cities, where the Voodoo religion is widely practised, [translation] "seems" to be more tolerant with respect to members of sexual minorities, "such as in the Sud and Artibonite departments" (France 2017, 71). According to the same source, such tolerance is attributable to the presence of voodoo, as voodoo temples welcome homosexual

individuals, and that the province [translation] “seems to demonstrate a greater culture of respect and the communities co-exist there more easily than in Port-au-Prince” (France 2017, 71).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Support Group for Repatriates and Refugees (Groupe d'appui aux rapatriés et réfugiés, GARR) is a Haitian platform, which, since 1991, has brought together associations and NGOs advocating the human rights of migrants in Haiti; it operates in Port-au-Prince and in the regions and provides returnees and deportees in Haiti with humanitarian aid and reintegration assistance (GARR n.d.).

[2] Jean Eddy Saint Paul, a professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and founding director of the Haitian Studies Institute at the City University of New York, specializes in the sociology of citizenship and has published many works on civil society and the Haitian state (Brooklyn College n.d.).

[3] The National Human Rights Defense Network (Réseau national de défense des droits humains, RNDDH) is a Haitian NGO that conducts systematic and routine visits in key institutions throughout Haiti to monitor the observance of human rights (RNDDH n.d.).

[4] Advocates Plus (Défenseurs Plus) is [translation] “a not-for-profit organization committed to promoting and effectively defending human rights in Haiti” (Défenseurs Plus n.d.).

[5] The Citizens' Initiative for Human Rights (Initiative citoyenne pour les droits de l'homme, ICDH) is a Haitian human rights advocacy organization that was founded in 2010 and whose activities include providing migrants with assistance (ICDH n.d.).

[6] In 2013, the Dominican Republic's Constitutional Court ruled that people born in the Dominican Republic after 1929 who did not have at least one parent of Dominican descent would not have the right to Dominican citizenship (UN 15 May 2018, para. 60).

References

- Brooklyn College. N.d. "Jean Eddy Saint Paul." [Accessed 21 Nov. 2018]
- Défenseurs Plus. N.d. "Le collectif Défenseursplus.org." [Accessed 20 Nov. 2018]
- Fondation Sérovie. N.d. "About Us." [Accessed 27 Nov. 2018]
- France. 2017. Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (OFPRA). ___
Rapport de mission en République d'Haïti. [Accessed 27 Nov. 2018]
- Groupe d'appui aux rapatriés et réfugiés (GARR). 16 November 2018.
Correspondence Directorate from a coordinator to the Research Directorate.
- Groupe d'appui aux rapatriés et réfugiés (GARR). 14 November 2018.
Correspondence from a coordinator to the Research Directorate.
- Groupe d'appui aux rapatriés et réfugiés (GARR). N.d. "Présentation." Document
sent by a coordinator to the Research Directorate on 14 November 2018.
- Human Rights Watch. 2018. "Haïti." Rapport mondial 2018. [Accessed 27 Nov. 2018]
- Initiative citoyenne pour les droits de l'homme (ICDH). 16 November 2018.
Correspondence from the director to the Research Directorate.
- Initiative citoyenne pour les droits de l'homme (ICDH). 15 November 2018.
Correspondence from the director to the Research Directorate.
- Initiative citoyenne pour les droits de l'homme (ICDH). N.d. "ICDH." [Accessed
21 Nov. 2018]
- Kouraj. N.d. "Nos actions." [Accessed 27 Nov. 2018]
- Lawyer, Défenseurs Plus. 19 November 2018. Telephone interview with the
Research Directorate.
- Réseau national de défense des droits humains (RNDDH). 27 November 2018.
Correspondence from a program director to the Research Directorate.
- Réseau national de défense des droits humains (RNDDH). N.d. "Vue d'ensemble du
programme de surveillance." [Accessed 28 Nov. 2018]
- Rezo Nòdwès. 4 April 2018. Dieudonné St Cyr. "Bienvenue en Haïti: La PNH fait la
chasse aux bandits dans la zone de l'aéroport!" [Accessed 22 Nov. 2018]

Saint Paul, Jean Eddy, professor of sociology at Brooklyn College.
19 November 2018. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

United Nations (UN). 15 May 2018. Human Rights Council. __ *Élaboration d'un plan d'action national pour la mise en oeuvre des recommandations des mécanismes des droits de l'homme en Haïti. Rapport du Haut-Commissaire des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme.* (A/HRC/38/30) [Accessed 21 Nov. 2018]

University of Miami School of Law and University of Chicago Law School. 2015. Immigration Clinic, Human Rights Clinic and International Human Rights Clinic. __ *Aftershocks: The Human Impact of U.S. Deportations to Post-Earthquake Haiti.* [Accessed 20 Nov. 2018]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Alternative Chance; assistant professor in social work at an American university whose interests include Haiti; Centre œcuménique des droits humains; Haïti – Office de la protection du citoyen, Police nationale d'Haïti; Haitian Diaspora Working in Haiti; Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti; Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development; professor in the Sociology Department of a Canadian university whose interests include Haiti; professor of legal education at an immigration law clinic at an American university.

Internet sites, including: Alternative Chance; Amnesty International; ecoi.net; Freedom House; International Committee of the Red Cross; International Crisis Group; Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development; International Organization for Migration; UN – Refworld; US – Department of State.

Date modified:

2018-06-25

