

HBA v. Biden Press Conference

Haitian Bridge Alliance, Justice Action Center, Innovation Law Lab

12/21/21
12:00 pm ET

Operator: Good day, everyone, and welcome to press conference Haitian Bridge Alliance Versus Biden. At this time, all participants are listen only mode. Later, you'll have an opportunity to ask questions during the question-and-answer session. You may register to ask a question at any by pressing the * and 1 on your touchtone phone. I will be standing by should you need any assistance. Please note this call may be recorded. It is now my pleasure to turn today's program to Taisha Saintil.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you so much and good afternoon, everyone. Thank you all for joining us and welcome. My name is my name is Taisha Saintil. I am with Haitian Bridge Alliance and I will be your moderator for today. I've sent in the press release prompted by the incident that occurred in Del Rio Haitian Bridge Alliance Directed Action Center and Innovation Law Lab filed a lawsuit yesterday against the Biden Administration. Today, we will hear from some of the attorneys as well as some plaintiffs from this suit. To begin, we will hear from Guerline Jozef. As the Co-Founder and the Executive Director of Haitian Bridge Alliance, Guerline has tirelessly been in the fight for liberation and justice for all, especially for Black migrants since their journey is extremely different and much more difficult. She and her team comprise of the only Black-led [patient-led] and women-led organization that was underground in Del Rio. So, Guerline, super great to have you and welcome.

Guerline Jozef: Thank you so much, Taisha, and everyone for being on this call today. As we are on the eve of celebrating Christmas and as we continue to see the

extreme prejudice of the government against Black migrants, Haitian migrants who have been asking for refuge. As of today, this morning as we are speaking, there were deportation flights to Haiti. Yesterday, they had three deportation flights to Haiti. Last week, 10 deportation flights to Haiti. It is painful. It is undescrivable what we have been dealing with at the community. Again, the treatment of Haitian migrant, Haitian immigrants, Haitian asylum seekers is not lost on us. What we saw in Del Rio is not lost on our community. The United States have a long history of anti-Black racism. The immigration system is rooted anti-Black racism. The immigration prison system is rooted and built on the back of Haitian migrants, Haitian asylum seekers and refugees, so today, we stand with those asylum seekers and those people who are under the bridge, those who have been erased, disappeared, deported, expelled without any, any access to even be able to get protection to their western [Unintelligible] and we will continue to push for protection. So, we stand with them and we'll continue to push for protection for them. As I mentioned, the pain that we have had to endure these past few years and specifically since September is beyond what we can describe, but here, we are standing in collaboration, in support with those people who are under the bridge, those who have been deported, those who were pushed back to Mexico to let them know that we see them, we hear them, they are not alone, and we, together, will hold President Biden and the administration accountable and make sure we provide protection for all people in need, but specifically for the Haitian migrant and asylum seekers. To date, over 11,000 people have been deported to Haiti. Those who are under the bridge. You will hear from them. You will hear their stories. The pictures we saw in September, the world finally saw the realities we have been dealing with, and so we say immigration is a Black issue. Immigration is a racial justice issue. Immigration is a human rights issue. Immigration is a [you and I] issue, and

we can no longer turn our eyes. We can no longer accept the treatment that we have been receiving. Thank you so much. Back to you, Taisha.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you, Guerline. Thankful that you are in this fight. It would not be the same without you. We will now be hearing from a plaintiff in the suit, “Esther”. Given the language barrier, a colleague from Haitian Bridge Alliance, Nicole Phillips, will be asking questions in English, then Haitian Creole. As “Esther” answers, Sherlee Skai, also with Haitian Bridge Alliance, will provide interpretation for all of us. Welcome, “Esther”, Nicole, and Shirley.

Nicole Phillips: Thank you so much and thank you audience for your patience. [Kreyol] So, I said please introduce yourself, how old are you, where are you and your family living right now and do you have children? Okay. [Kreyol]

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: Good morning, everyone. My name is “Esther”. I am currently living in Mexico. I have a child who's 18 months old. [Kreyol]

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: I am 26 years old.

Nicole Phillips: So, I'll ask her the question. Can you please describe your experience under the bridge in Del Rio in September? [Kreyol]

“Esther”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: My experience was a terrible one. On Saturday September 18, that's when I arrived under the bridge. [Kreyol].

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: When we arrived, they gave us a blue card and we were in a line and they asked us to wait for our number to be called.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: When we were waiting and we arrived around 4:00 AM, nothing was offered to us although they saw that I was with a baby and myself and my family had to look for where to stay.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: We spent the day without any food because they didn't really feed us or whatever they gave was not enough for all the people that were present.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: On Sunday, I wanted to wash my baby's clothes, which were dirty.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: While I was on my way, I saw a lot of people that were about to go to the water because they needed to go get food on the Mexican side.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: I told my husband to also get some food because we were really hungry. He was afraid because the water was really high and he was afraid maybe he would get arrested and be deported back to Guatemala.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: So, after I washed the baby's clothes, I decided to cross the river myself. I didn't have any shoes on.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: Unfortunately, after a while looking for where to get food, I realized I wasn't in the right area. I would have to take a taxi to go away further up to finally get some food.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: So, I gave up on finding food. I only saw somebody who was selling some ice and I purchased some ice and was heading on my way back, and while I was heading back, that's when I saw the officers on the horses and they started screaming at me to go back to Mexico.

“Esther”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: I tried to explain to them that my baby and my husband was on the other side, that I was trying to go back and they were not really listening to me, and they were coming towards me with the horse and screaming, “Go back to Mexico!”

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: So, while they were looking away for a minute, I tried to run back to the camp.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: After a couple of days while we were there, the baby actually got sick.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: When we tried to see someone/seek someone for medical attention, they basically only gave the baby some ice to reduce the fever and some syrup and that was it.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: The baby was still sick and when we returned, they only give us more ice and some fluid for the baby.

“Esther”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: On Friday, that’s the day when I was leaving the camp, my baby was still sleeping and the police officers came rushing me to get in the last bus that was leaving.

“Esther”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: That's when me, my husband, and my child, we returned to Mexico.

“Esther”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: If there's any questions.

Nicole Phillips: So, what I'll say to her is thank you, "Esther". Can you please describe how that experience made you feel and whether you had a fear of returning to Haiti? [Kreyol]

"Esther": [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: This experience gave me all kinds of feelings. As a young mother, me and my family, we were looking for protection and I did not expect that my baby would be treated like not a human.

Nicole Phillips: She also said, "I just wanted to file for asylum." [Kreyol]

"Esther": [Kreyol],

Nicole Phillips: Okay. Thank you very much, "Esther". Oh, sorry. Go head.

Sherlee Skai: I'm afraid to return to Haiti because of what happened to my family back in 2016, and especially with what's happening right now politically and the political unrest, I am really afraid and I was in search of protection.

Nicole Phillips: [Kreyol].

"Esther": [Kreyol].

Nicole Phillips: So, thank you very much, "Esther". We're going to now ask "Jacques" questions, but thank you so much for your testimony. [Kreyol]

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: Good morning, everyone. My name is “Jacques”. I’m currently in Haiti and I’m 25 years old.

Nicole Phillips: I’ll ask him the question of when did you arrive in Haiti and how did you get there. [Kreyol]

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: I was deported back to Haiti on September 22nd this year.

Nicole Phillips: Can you describe the experience under the bridge in Del Rio in the month of September? [Kreyol]

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: I arrived under the bridge around 8:00 in the morning. There was a line and they gave me a red card because I am a single male.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: I was asked to wait for my number to be called. After eight days, we were still waiting and we were only fed sandwiches and water sometimes. Some days, we wouldn't even get any water.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: There was nowhere to sleep. We slept on the floor, and although it was a very difficult moment, I really tried to hold on because I made a lot of sacrifices to be there.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: On the eighth day, my number was closed to be called, and it was like around midnight, so I was waiting and I looked like my phone was about to die, so I was paying attention in case they called me. Continue. “Jacques”.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: They called me. I got on the bus and they put me in my first detention center. Continue.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: So, in the first detention center, I was there for two days. I didn't know when it was day or night because I really couldn't see outside and they basically gave us a piece of plastic to put on the floor and to use as cover continuing.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: On the second day, around 6:00 AM, I was transferred to another detention center and I spent six days there, and again, I was basically sleeping on the floor, and from time to time, they would give us a sandwich to eat. During those six days, I could not brush my teeth. I could not shower.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: On the sixth day, around midnight, the officers came into our cells and started screaming for us to wake up, and we were handcuffed and we didn't really know where we were going. Nobody really said anything to us.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol].

Sherlee Skai: We were on the bus and we arrived to an area where we saw the airplane, and a lot of people in the bus started requesting water and we started complaining because we weren't really sure of what's happening, and we were asked – and that's when we understand that we were going to be deported, but they never said anything to us.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: Finally, around 8am, we were cuffed in both hands and seat and that's when we made our way to the plane, and at this time, there was still no explanation. They never told us that we were going to Haiti. Finally, there was an agent who told us that we were being deported because there were too many Haitians and that they really didn't have anywhere to put that many people. So, we had to be deported. He explained that he had nothing to do with this. He's just doing his job. He's just executing orders. Continue.

“Jacques”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: Then, I arrived at the Cap-Haïtien airport.

Nicole Phillips: Okay. [Kreyol] So, I asked him if he was afraid to return to Haiti and how his life is now. [Kreyol]

“Jacques”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: Yes, I was afraid to return back to Haiti, but unfortunately, I never had the chance to request asylum, which is why I left Haiti since 2019, and now, I am back here and I'm hiding. Even with my family, I have very limited contact, and the country is even worse than the way it was since I left in 2019.

Nicole Phillips: Okay. [Kreyol] Thank you so much, "Jacques", for your presentation. Back to you, Taisha.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you, Nicole, Shirley, "Jacques", "Esther". Especially to "Jacques" and "Esther", thank you for your courage. "Jacques", [Kreyol]. We will now be hearing from Karen Tumlin. Karen is impact litigator and the founder of Justice Action Center. The mission of her team is to bring fierce courtroom advocacy to the unseen problems of this world. Karen, welcome.

Karen Tumlin: Thank you, Taisha. Thank you to everyone who is with us today. My name is Karen Tumlin and I'm the founder and director of the Justice Action Center, a new non-profit designed to harness the power of storytelling in the courtroom to shine a spotlight on immigration issues. Yesterday, we filed a major class action lawsuit with Haitian Bridge Alliance and Innovation Law Lab for two reasons. Number one, we must hold the Biden administration accountable for the unconscionable solo rights abuses that occurred in Del Rio, Texas, when border patrol agents can horseback, you split reigned and abused people who were simply exercising their right to apply for safe haven in the United States. Number two, we are demanding that our plaintiffs and all those similarly situated, be afforded their right to seek asylum or other forms of immigration protection. In short, the United States must bring back those they expelled and those who fled in fear of being expelled to Haiti. Haitian Bridge Alliance versus Biden represents the

first full accounting of what happened in Del Rio, Texas in mid-September and the picture, quite frankly, is damning. The United States government, at the highest level, knew of a potential influx of asylum seekers in the United States and they chose to not even do the bare minimum to prepare. As a result, when asylum seekers arrive like “Esther” and “Jacques”, who you heard from today, they were greeted with no food, no shelter, and a bizarre ticket system that left them in the dark about what would happen to them and why. At no point where any of our individual plaintiffs allowed to assert their asylum claim. Many reported hearing US officials belittle or demean Haitian people, making derogatory comments about them or those they were with. When people were expelled, they were not even told where they were going. They were shackled and put on planes, some were lied to and only discovered that they were returned to Haiti upon landing. Our lawsuit claims that the Biden administration violated the US constitution by violating due process and the equal protection rights of those in Del Rio. Specifically, the lawsuit outlines that the conditions that those in Del Rio were subjected to failed to meet the basic standards of due process, and even shocked the conscience given how dire they were and how little was done to afford the basic necessities to Haitian families and individuals gathered in Del Rio. In addition, the lawsuit details that race and anti-Blackness were a significant reason for how the Haitians in Del Rio were treated. Setting aside the legal claims for a moment, we must remember that President Biden has broken some of his foundational campaign promises. Two years ago tomorrow, Dr. Jill Biden came to Southern Texas to decry the Trump administration’s treatment on migrants. I am disappointed to report that this treatment continues on President Biden’s watch. The Biden campaign promised to welcome people with dignity, and instead, we have returned to Trump era border policies, combined with a perpetuation of the anti-Blackness that permeates our immigration system. This is not the change

millions thought when Biden was elected, and we are holding the administration account to that with this lawsuit. Taisha, I turn it back to you.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you so much, Karen. I'm thankful for your team for being in this fight to welcome all with dignity. Next, we'll hear from Tess Hellgren. She is an attorney and deputy legal director for the Innovation Law Lab. Welcome, Tess.

Tess Hellgren: Thank you, Taisha, and thank you, everyone, especially "Esther" and "Jacques" for sharing your moving stories with us and for your bravery. My name is Tess Hellgren. I'm the deputy legal director at Innovation Law Lab, an organization that combines advocacy, law, and technology to further migrant justice. As it's clear from what has already been shared, the Biden administration is weaponizing the Title 42 process in a way that is unimaginably cruel and violent for thousands of Black and Haitian migrants. It is also entirely illegal. In addition to alleging violations of the constitution, as Karen outlined, our lawsuit contends that the government's use of the Title 42 process against Haitian asylum seekers, like "Esther" and "Jacques" in Del Rio, has violated the Administrative Procedure Act. This act, known as the APA, requires federal agencies to comply with relevant federal law and to carry out mandatory legal duties. It also prohibits agencies from taking actions that are arbitrary, capricious, or an abusive discretion. Our lawsuit alleges that defendant's use of Title 42 against "Esther", "Jacques", and our plaintiffs is contrary to law in many ways. First, their use of Title 42 violates the purported authority, the Public Health Service Act, which does not authorize expulsions and does not authorize denial of access to the asylum system. Defendants Title 42 process is also contrary to the Immigration and Nationality Act, which guarantees non-citizens present on US soil a right to apply for asylum and prohibits the United States from removing someone to a country where their life or

freedom would be threatened on account of a protective ground. It also violates the convention against torture, which prohibits the United States from sending individuals back to a country where it is more likely than not that they will be tortured. Defendant's use of Title 42 against Haitian asylum seekers in Del Rio is also arbitrary and capricious because defendants have not provided a reasoned explanation for adopting and implementing the Title 42 process. We'll add that to the extent that defendant's proper public health as a rationale for this process, such an explanation is pre-textual, and indeed runs counter to the evidence before the government. Defendants own experts have warned that the Title 42 process actually undermines public health. Defendant agencies have also failed to consider other measures that can mitigate any public health risks, including by providing vaccines or COVID testing to asylum seekers. Importantly, defendant agencies have failed to consider the greater implications of their use of Title 42. Most importantly, the Title 42 expelled people back to the very countries they have fled, where they may face persecution, torture, and death. Our lawsuit also challenges defendants' Haitian deterrence policy. What we mean is the policy by which Haitian asylum seekers in Del Rio, like "Esther" and "Jacques", were subjected to gross abuses and were rapidly expelled in an attempt to deter other Haitian asylum seekers from coming to the United States. It is unlawful as well as arbitrary and capricious to adopt such a policy to deter Haitian and Black migration. Current conditions in Haiti are unbearable and it is very well-documented that Haitian migrants are fleeing in search of safety as you've heard today from "Esther" and John, yet it seems our government has entirely forgotten this crucial undeniable fact. Seeking asylum is lawful. What our lawsuit does ask is for the court to declare defendant's actions as violations of law, to stop the unlawful Title 42 process and the Haitian deterrence policy, and to order the government to facilitate the return of "Esther", "Jacques", and other individual plaintiffs to the United States in order to vindicate their rights to seek asylum and to

be protected from persecution. We are also asking the court to certify a class of asylum seekers who were similarly abused by defendants in Del Rio. So, this lawsuit can also seek justice for the thousands of other Black and Haitian asylum seekers who were subjected to defendants' inhumane treatment. The US immigration system has punished Black migrants and the people of Haiti time and time again. So, with this lawsuit, we ask for justice. We say no to white supremacy and the immigration system. We say no to the violence, the discrimination, the expulsion, and the cruelty. We stand with "Esther", "Jacques", our plaintiffs with Haitian Bridge Alliance, and with all of the Haitian people harmed by US immigration enforcement, and we call for the government US government to follow the law, to build a humane asylum system, and to welcome people with dignity. I'll hand it back to you, Taisha.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you so much, Tess, and thank you to the Innovation Lab team. I'm so grateful for all of our speakers. I will now pass it to the operator to give instructions on how to queue for questions.

Operator: At this time, if you'd like to ask a question, please press star (*), one (1) on your touchtone phone. You may remove yourself from the queue at any time by pressing the pound key. Once again, that is star and one to ask a question and we will pause a moment for our questions to queue.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you. Again, thank you, everyone for being here. As we move into our question-and-answer portion, I want to reiterate that asylum is a legal right and this is a thing that I saw and I also heard to all of the speakers today, all of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit really have one thing in common, and that is, while there are honoring their human rights, they were all treated inhumanely. Their right to safety, protection, their right to be able to pursue life, to pursue liberty, and to pursue happiness were all taken away from

them. As I was in the real part of Haitian Bridge Alliance where we provided humanitarian services and support to these migrants there, we met people like “Esther”, like “Jacques”. When we spoke to them, it was also abundantly clear that not only were their rights violated, but the level of anti-Blackness was overwhelming, the things that they have to endure. So, again, we say that immigration is a Black issue and asylum is a legal right. Again, thank you all so much for your presence. The operator, we can now go into our Q & A portion.

Operator: As a reminder, that is star, one if you would like to ask a question, and we will take our first question from Quinn Owen with ABC News.

Quinn Owen: Hi. Thank you all for organizing this. I’m wondering if the translators are still on the line so I might ask a question to “Esther” and “Jacques”.

Taisha Saintil: Yes.

Sherlee Skai: We’re still here. Yes.

Quinn Owen: Great. For “Esther”. Of course, your son was sick at the time that you were in Del Rio. I’m wondering how he’s doing now and how your family is now doing in Mexico and what the conditions are like there? That’s my first question.

Sherlee Skai: [Kreyol]

“Esther”: [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: Thank you so much for asking. He's doing a lot better now. I am here in Mexico with my family. It's a stressful situation, but we're really trying to make the best of it. Thank you.

Quinn Owen: Then, for both "Esther" and "Jacques", are there any plans to return to the US to make an asylum claim, and when would that happen?

Sherlee Skai: [Kreyol]

"Esther": [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: This is "Esther", and yes, I do still plan on requesting asylum from the United States. I don't have a date yet, but I would really like that as soon as possible. "Jacques", [Kreyol].

"Jacques": [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: Yes, I don't have a plan on how to do that, but I am right back to the place where I was fleeing from and I'm really not at peace where I am. This is something that I still plan on doing, and hopefully, as soon as possible. Thank you.

Karen Tumlin: Taisha, can I add one thing? This is Karen. I just want to add one thing to the question. Thank you so much for the question. As you heard both "Esther" and "Jacques" say, of course, absolutely, they're intending to return to seek asylum whenever that is open. The issue is, and this was front and center in the lawsuit, presently, even though seeking asylum is legal and is a human right, there is no legal path for "Esther", for "Jacques", or anyone who is fleeing persecution and even death to properly seek and assert those legal rights that they have in the United States. I also just want

to say that you heard them say, right? There is no peace. They have no peace because that process has been closed to them and closed to all Haitians. Back to you, Taisha.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you and thank you for the question. Operator, do we have another question in the queue?

Operator: We do have one more question. Tamara Rodriguez with Island TV, your line's open.

Tamara Rodriguez: Thank you very much and thank you so much for putting this press conference together. It helps a lot to understand firsthand what happened and what is scheduled to happen. I do have a question; I can also ask it in Creole if you'd like. I have a question for "Esther" and "Jacques", and then I also have a question for one of the lawyers. The question for "Esther" and "Jacques" is have they received - I know "Jacques" said that he's in hiding, but when he landed, did the Haitian government give him any assistance? So, what happened when he landed? I am not sure if I missed it if he said that. So, I'd like to ask that question, and then to the lawyer, I would like to ask, can you explain what you mean when you say that there is no legal way for either one of them to seek asylum? Can you just expand on that?

Sherlee Skai: [Kreyol]

"Jacques": [Kreyol]

Sherlee Skai: I received no assistance. I received 10,000 gourde when I just arrived and I have been in hiding ever since, and I don't know of any type of assistance there is for people like me.

Taisha Saintil: I want to clarify that is equivalent to about \$100.00. I just want to clarify, upon arriving in Haiti, he was given about \$100.00 and was being left without any other support.

Tamara Rodriguez: Yes, thank you for clarifying that. I was going to mention that that's a little under \$100.00 with today's rate. Thank you for that. Then, my follow-up question was to one of the lawyers. I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name. You mentioned that there was no legal path for them to seek asylum. Could you expand on that please?

Karen Tumlin: Certainly. My name is Karen, and what I mean by that is right now, we have a situation where President Biden is, number one, continuing a policy put in place by former President Trump that expels individuals attempting to seek asylum. That is what's called the Title 42 order. It was applied at enormous scale to individuals in Del Rio. In addition, President Biden has put back in place what the very shameful, incredibly harmful Remain in Mexico program where asylum seekers who attempted to present themselves at the border and seek asylum are returned back to Mexico instead of being processed in an orderly fashion in the United States and given court dates where they can make their claims. That is an outrageous situation that makes a mockery of our law and puts people at risk. In fact, it's unprecedented. When President Trump was in office, both Title 42 and Remain in Mexico were not operating at this magnitude at the same time. So, we do not have an asylum system in the United States, what we have right now is an expulsion system. I hope that clarifies it.

Tamara Rodriguez: [Pause] Yes, thank you.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you, Karen. Thank you for the question. Operator, any other question in the queue?

Operator: We have another question from Quinn Owen with ABC News.

Quinn Owen: Hi. Thanks again. I just thought I'd jump back in here with two more questions, and whoever is best position to answer these, please jump in. First, is there any concern that the time that some of the defendants spent outside of Haiti could compromise their asylum claims, considering it was Haiti where the states affiliated violence that some experience took place? I'm also looking to confirm the identity of Mirard Joseph, who I believe was pictured in the New York Times article by Eileen Sullivan that was published yesterday, if someone could just confirm that for me as well, that would be great.

Taisha Saintil: Sure. We do have Attorney Daniel Tully with Justice Action Center. I'm not sure if he'd want to take that question.

Tess Hellgren: I think it's actually Tess Hellgren from Innovation Law Lab. I think unfortunately, Daniel's line has dropped. In response to your first question about time spent outside Haiti, our plaintiffs and others, as explained in the complaint, have also faced extreme prejudice, discrimination, and instability in other countries outside of Haiti, and for those reasons have been unable to stay in other countries, and so the [state], although some of them have been returned back to the very circumstances that they fled in Haiti, the time that they spent outside the country also should not undermine their ability to seek refuge under the full extent of the law and the asylum process in the United States.

Quinn Owen: Then is there any way to just confirm from Mirard Joseph's identity as the person pictured in the lead photo of that New York Times story yesterday

by Eileen Sullivan? Of course, that's been widely published. We published it as well, but I just wanted to make sure that was accurate.

Guerline Jozef: Hi, this is Guerline Jozef with the Haitian Bridge Alliance. We can confirm that based on our conversation and ongoing investigation that he is the gentleman who was asking asylum and who was abused by the CBP officer in uniform in the picture.

Quinn Owen: Thank you very much.

Taisha Saintil: Thank you all for your questions. We are getting at the end of our press call. We are not currently taking questions and this was the last question for today. Again, thank you all so much for joining. As a reminder, please reach out to me, Taisha Saintil, or Alex at the Innovation Law Lab or Tasha of Justice Action Center. All of our emails are on the press release, and you could also go to bit.ly/HBAvBiden to view the press release where our email addresses will be under. Again, that link is bit.ly/HBAvBiden for the press release, and on there also contains a link to the full complaint. Thank you all so much for joining and thank you to all of our speakers. We hope you have a great evening and a happy holidays.

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