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Immigration and
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Commission de l'immigration
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Haiti: Revenge committed by gangs or by other organized crime structures; capacity of gangs or other organized crime structures to trace their targets, including if the targets return to Haiti after a long absence (2014 - May 2015) [HTI105162.FE]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on revenge committed by gangs or by other organized crime structures in Haiti could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. The content of this Response comes entirely for information obtained from these four sources:

- An affiliate researcher from the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, who is also the Director of Social Work Education for a social sciences institute in Haiti, as well as a doctoral candidate whose thesis is on armed gangs in Haiti (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015).
- The VicePresident of Security Governance Group (15 May 2015). Security Governance Group is a private research and consulting firm in Kitchener, Ontario, that specializes in “the security and governance dimensions of state building, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction” (Security Governance Group n.d.).
- An independent consultant and researcher in public safety, working in Port-au-Prince (8 June 2015).
- A representative from the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (Plate-forme des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains, POHDH) (1 May 2015), a Haitian NGO coalition of eight Haitian human rights bodies (POHDH n.d.).

1. Revenge Committed by Gangs or Other Organized Crime Structures 1.1 Prevalence of Acts of Revenge

Sources state that it is common for gangs or other organized crime structures to commit acts of revenge (Independent consultant 8 June 2015; Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015). The doctoral candidate, however, pointed out that these acts of revenge have become less frequent in recent years (ibid.). According to the POHDH representative, there is a [translation] “widespread culture of revenge” not only in “organized crime gangs” but also in society, in street life (1 May 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Main Perpetrators and Victims of Acts of Revenge

According to the doctoral candidate, the perpetrators of acts of revenge belong to “armed urban gangs as well as other armed political groups and organized criminal groups/networks including traffickers” (3 June 2015). According to the POHDH representative, organized crime gangs that commit acts of revenge may do so on behalf of the government or the police (1 May 2015).

According to the doctoral candidate, among the acts of revenge reported in recent years, some were “reported to be committed by members of the insurgent groups affiliated with the disbanded Haitian army” (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the doctoral candidate, the victims of the acts of revenge committed by gangs or other organized crime structures in Haiti are mainly family members or loved ones of the target (ibid). According to the POHDH representative, revenge is committed on relatives of the target when the target [translation] “has fled to save themselves in another city, region or elsewhere” (1 May 2015). Moreover, according to the doctoral candidate, victims of acts of revenge are “generally adults” (3 June 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.3 Nature of and Reasons for Acts of Revenge

According to the POHDH representative, acts of revenge may range from [translation] “forceful recovery of small sums of money to the killing of the person targeted” (POHDH 1 May 2015). Similarly, the doctoral candidate provided the following details:

Revenge acts vary from group to group. Revenge acts also vary based on the severity of the offense, the level of certainty that the target actually engaged in the offensive act which motivated the revenge, the potential continued threat of the target, and the perception of target’s power in the community.

[...]

Over the past five years the common types of revenge acts perpetrated by armed groups have included:

- Destruction of the target’s home, business, vehicle, or other significant property such as work tools, livestock, or burning of crops
- Theft of significant value items, sometimes committed at gunpoint [...]
- Sexual assault, most commonly against a vulnerable female closely related to the target and sometimes in the target’s presence
- Summary execution
- Shooting at the target’s home, vehicle, the target themselves, or the target’s loved ones
- Abduction of the target or the target’s loved ones
- Beatings, physical torture (including burning), and physical assault with a weapon (3 June 2015).

According to the independent consultant, the reasons for acts of revenge committed by gangs or other organized crime structures vary from [translation] “the most trivial to the most serious,” for

example, they may be for romantic reasons (“sharing girlfriends”), theft-related or conflict-related concerning the “loot to share” (Independent consultant 8 June 2015). According to the doctoral candidate, the acts of revenge can be

intimidation aimed at curbing behavior or preventing legal testimony while others appear to be motivated by a desire to stifle community dissent. Still other acts of revenge appear to be simple “payback” for speaking out publically, leaving an armed group, or organizing/seeking police assistance against the armed group (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015).

Furthermore, according to the doctoral candidate, social sciences researchers have collected examples of acts of revenge. They include the following, which were perpetrated in 2014:

- An advocate against sexual assault who requested that a judge detain a suspected rapist (from an armed urban gang) was attacked in her home and forced to watch her adolescent daughter be raped by a group of men.
- The home of a family which had relocated after the target left a criminal gang was completely destroyed while neighbors watched but did not intervene.
- The fields of a family suspected of talking to police about trafficking were burned.
- After accusing an armed gang of extortion and seeking help from police, a market woman was threatened with rape and all of her inventory was stolen.
- A community leader who spoke out against an armed group in his urban neighborhood was shot at, threatened with death, and his home was broken into.
- A man suspected of giving police information about a kidnapping ring was threatened. His home was shot at and broken into. His dog was killed and dumped at his front door.
- Several days after testifying in a gang murder-for-hire case, a witness was attacked and stabbed with a machete by three armed masked men who broken into his home in the night (ibid.)

Further information on revenge committed by organized crime in Haiti in 2014 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Protection Provided by the Police

The doctoral candidate stated that rather than file a criminal complaint, victims of acts of revenge tend to only inform the police by filing a “plent,” a Creole term whose meaning is similar to an incident report and which is rarely investigated” (Doctoral candidate 9 June 2015; ibid. 3 June 2015).

According to the VicePresident of Security Governance Group, the Haitian police are not very effective in solving crimes because they have limited personnel and a restricted capacity for conducting investigations (Security Governance Group 15 May 2015). Similarly, the doctoral candidate stated that without resources, the police cannot “document and present criminal complaints” to justice, a necessary first step before a complaint is actually investigated (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015). She also explained that contrary to what happens in Canada, for example, the police generally do not deal with criminal investigations, as it “usually centers around the discovery process during criminal trials with the judge and prosecutor playing a significant role” (ibid.). Moreover, the doctoral candidate stated that police officers are reluctant to pursue armed

gangs, out of fear of becoming a target themselves (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Capacity of Gangs or Other Organized Crime Structures to Trace Their Targets

The POHDH representative stated that

[translation]

gangs are able to trace their victims due to the fact that Haiti is a very small country, and with few means and some motivation, a person can be easily traced with a car, a telephone and informal informant networks in popular municipalities and neighbourhoods (1 May 2015).

Similarly, sources report that “strangers” are easily recognized (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015; Independent consultant 8 June 2015). The Independent consultant stated that [translation] “everyone knows each other. It is very difficult to hide somewhere. For example, people talk” (ibid). According to the doctoral candidate,

Haitian culture is such that it is appropriate and desirable to know personal details about those who live in your area and this information is spread quickly by word of mouth [...] This facilitates the location and tracking of individuals (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015).

Furthermore, she explained that residents act as informants for armed gangs, “in an effort to avoid being targeted themselves or to demonstrate their loyalty” (ibid.). She also states that Haitians living abroad who may fear for their business or relatives in Haiti may also act as informants (ibid.). However, she adds that individuals outside of Haiti “are rarely ever directly targeted” by armed groups (ibid.). Further information on the reasons that inhabitants collaborate with armed gangs or on informers in the Haitian diaspora could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the POHDH representative, there is no [translation] “prescription” for revenge in Haiti, as “there have been times when a person is traced a number of years after escaping, then kidnapped and tortured, even after 2, 3 or 5 years” (1 May 2015). Similarly, the doctoral candidate stated that “[a] person who is targeted by [a] gang today may not ever be safe in Haiti ten years from now; even when the gang leader dies, the individual may still be pursued by other gang members or gangs with which that gang had an alliance” (Doctoral candidate 3 June 2015). According to the same source, in 2014, an individual who provided information to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haïti, MINUSTAH) regarding the activities of a network of traffickers ten years earlier and had gone into exile in another country, was subsequently traced by that network and subjected to acts of revenge by it (ibid.). Corroborating information on that specific case could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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.

References

Doctoral candidate and researcher. 9 June 2015. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

_____. 3 June 2015. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

Independent consultant and researcher in public safety. 8 June 2015. Telephone interview.

Plate-forme des organisations haïtiennes des droits humains (POHDH). 1 May 2015. Telephone interview with a representative.

_____. N.d. “Présentation de la POHDH.” <http://www.pohdh.org/breve.php?id_breve=42> [Accessed 10 June 2015]

Security Governance Group. 15 May 2015. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by the VicePresident.

_____. N.d. “About.” <<http://www.secgovgroup.com/about>> [Accessed 10 June 2015]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The following person was unable to provide information for this Response: Professor of Sociology, Wesleyan University, Middletown, United States.

Attempts to contact the following people and organizations were unsuccessful: Comité des avocats pour le respect; Groupe Médialernatif; Regroupement des organisations canado-haïtiennes pour le développement.

Internet sites, including: AlterPresse; ecoi.net; Factiva; Fondation Connaissance et Libertés; Haiti – ministère de la Justice et de la Sécurité publique; HaïtiLibre; Haiti Press Network; *Haïti progress*; InSight Crime; International Crisis Group; *Le Nouvelliste*; Organization of American States; Security Sector Reform Resource Centre; United Nations – United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Refworld; United States – Department of State.