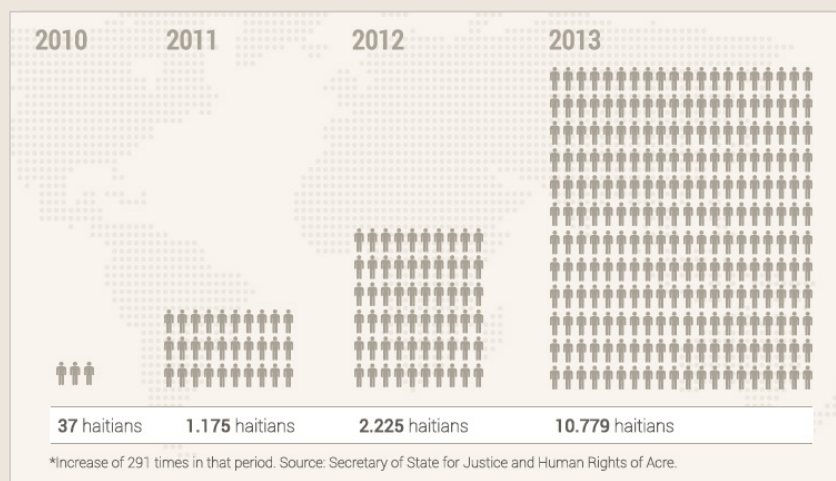


Invisible Crisis: The Case of Haitian Immigrants in Brazil

August 2013

SINCE THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT started issuing humanitarian visas to Haitians in 2012, the inflow of Haitian immigrants to the country has been growing rapidly. This increased inflow has occurred in an improvised and unstructured manner from a legal and operational point of view, leading to flagrant violations of immigrant rights. Conectas believes that by influencing how Brazil responds to the increased inflow of immigrants, it will also be able to influence the country's international position on human rights. Brazil's prominent role among emerging countries and the responsibility that this role entails is one of the central features of the program.



According to data from the Acre State Department of Justice and Human Rights, the state of Acre received 37 Haitians in 2010. In 2011, this number increased to 1,175. In 2012, it rose to 2,225 and, last year, to 10,779 – a 291-fold increase in three years. The situation facing Haitians in Acre is, in fact, a humanitarian emergency that has been hidden by the government. In August 2013, Conectas conducted an [on-site mission](#) to Brasileia, a small town in the state of Acre on the border with Bolivia, to investigate the situation facing the Haitians there. At the time, more than 830 immigrants – nearly all of them Haitians – were living in unhealthy conditions in a shelter built for just 200 people. During the mission, Conectas took [20 statements](#) from Haitians who were sheltered in Brasileia.

Given the humanitarian crisis facing the Haitian immigrants, Conectas conducted a series of advocacy actions – on the national and international levels – to give visibility to the situation and to call for effective measures from the Brazilian government to provide shelter for them.





Denouncing the situation in Brasília

Conectas met with officials from the Ministries of Labor, Justice and Foreign Relations to denounce the disrespect and violation of human rights in the town of Brasileia. During these meetings with authorities, Conectas addressed the humanitarian visa, the state of the shelter in Brasileia and the need for federal intervention, as well as the country's problematic national immigration policy. Read more [here](#).



1st National Conference on Immigration and Refugees

In December 2013, Conectas was elected a member of the Committee on Civil Society Monitoring of Immigration and Refugees Actions (CASC-Migrante) of the National Justice Department. The Committee serves to raise the involvement of civil society in the monitoring and assessment of immigration policy. As a member of CASC-Migrante, Conectas was able to vote in the first National Conference on Immigration and Refugees (COMIGRAR) held in May 2014. The Conference was organized to provide an opportunity for broader dialogue to discuss legislation and to develop a National Plan for Immigration and Refugees based on human rights.





Advocacy in the transfer of Haitians to São Paulo

In April 2014, the Acre state government informed Conectas of the [closure of the shelter in Brasileia](#) and the transfer of the immigrants living there – mostly Haitians – to São Paulo. As a result of this change of scenery, Conectas liaised with its partners and conducted a series of advocacy actions, such as engaging with the Immigration Coordination Authority in the state of São Paulo to assure that the state had the capacity to coordinate and cope with the arrival of these immigrants. In May 2014, the São Paulo government personally notified Conectas about the establishment of a new temporary shelter for the Haitians, in the region of Glicério. The temporary shelter, to be used for 3 months, has the capacity to hold 120 people. Moreover, in a public hearing that discussed the draft bill of the new Immigration Law, held in the same month, the government announced that it was looking for a permanent shelter that would start operating once the temporary shelter had been used for three months. The new permanent shelter will also serve as a reference center for immigrants.

Recommendations to the UN and OAS

In an Urgent Appeal to the United Nations, Conectas called for the humanitarian crisis in Brasileia to be considered a consequence of the humanitarian situation in Haiti. The organization also asked for UN rapporteurs to be sent to Brasileia and to the places that are part of the route taken by Haitian immigrants across South America, to gather information in situ and question the management of the crisis by the countries involved. In the Organization of American States (OAS), Conectas and a partner organization submitted extensive documentation requesting a thematic hearing in the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the OAS to address the shelter and the regional responsibility for this crisis, which involves at least five countries (Brazil, Haiti, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru). *Read more at conectas.org.*

OAS thematic hearing: “The Human Rights Situation of Haitian Immigrants in the Americas”

In a thematic hearing of the IACHR held – at the request of Conectas and a partner organization – in Washington, United States, proposals were presented to the States through which the Haitians travel on their journey to Brazil. The purpose of the hearing was to ask for the IACHR to serve as a forum of regional dialogue, guaranteeing that the Haitians can travel along the immigration route safely and without abuse and exploitation. During the hearing, Conectas and the partner organization guided the debate and obtained recognition from the IACHR itself for its work with Haitian immigrants. Read more [here](#) and [a](#).





Statement in UN on the situation of Haitian immigrants

In March 2014, Conectas and the partner organization made an oral statement in the UN Human Rights Council on the humanitarian crisis at the shelter in Brasileia, in the state of Acre. Read more [here](#).

CONECTAS WILL CONTINUE TO PRESSURE for a reform of Brazil's immigration law and work with partner organizations to defend the human rights of immigrants.

