

SWORN STATEMENT OF HEZR

I, HEZR, swear under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1. My name is HEZR. I was born on XXX, 1991 in Distrito Central, Honduras. I am making this declaration in support of my asylum application.
2. I came to the United States on April 1, 2018, when I was 27 years old. I presented myself to immigration officials in Roma, Texas and expressed my intention to apply for asylum. I was detained afterwards as I awaited my credible fear interview. I fled to the United States under threats by gang members in Honduras. I was attacked and stabbed in the leg in February 2018. Fearing for my life and knowing that the police in Honduras would do nothing to protect me, I made the decision to come to the United States.
3. I initially missed a court hearing in March 2020 but the immigration court reopened my case after I established exceptional circumstances for failing to appear. My case was then dismissed from immigration court in 2023.
4. My application for asylum was not initially timely filed within one year of entry to the U.S. However, I was never advised by immigration officials after my credible fear interview that I had to separately file an application for asylum in the U.S. I am a member of the Mendez-Rojas class, and I timely filed my application for class membership with the immigration court.

Childhood in Honduras

5. I primarily lived with my mother, my grandmother, and my brother in Honduras when I was growing up. My father abandoned our family after my mother became pregnant with me. Unbeknownst to my mother, my father was having relationships with many other women during the years they were together. He ended up marrying one of these women.

I did not even meet my father until I was five years old. I probably saw him about four times during my entire childhood. When I was ten, my parents briefly reconciled, and my mother became pregnant with my brother.

6. I was the one who was primarily responsible for supporting my family when I was growing up. My mother had a small business selling fruits and vegetables out of our home. My grandmother has always had a lot of health problems, including being diabetic and suffering from a condition that affects her nerves. I attended university in Honduras, but I was thirteen classes short of being able to graduate. I always felt the weight of responsibility to take care of my family in Honduras.

I Endured Gender-Based Violence in Honduras

7. When I was 19 years old, I entered into a relationship with SR, a man who was 30 years older than me. SR provided a significant amount of financial support for me and my family, which allowed him near total control over me. I felt that I had to stay in this relationship to support my family. He routinely attempted to control everything I did including where I went. On one occasion he tried to force me to have sex with him, but I resisted, yelling, crying, and ultimately avoiding intercourse. Over time he became less interested and discontinued financial support after I refused to have sex with him on the day of the attempted assault.
8. When I was twenty-two years old, I became involved in prostitution. I was desperate for money and unable to find work. A friend and I met a girl who told us that we could be what is known as “Prepagos” or escorts and that would be an easy way to earn 2000 Lempira (about 80 US Dollars). This would involve going out with older or foreign men who were looking for the company of women. I did not want to do it, but I was desperate

for money. My friend and I met with a woman named P D, whose nickname was Big Mama. She put us in a taxi and took us to the parking lot of a hotel where there were two older, foreign men. She told us they would pay us 500 Lempiras to be with us for 15 minutes and that this was a test. I was very afraid and I realized that we had made a big mistake. She had pictures of us in catalogs that we had previously shared with her and that is how these men selected us. I was terrified and I started to cry. Later she took me to my house and gave me only 100 Lempiras. She told me I was never to talk about what had happened and that I should erase her number and face from my memory. She told me, remember that I have your photos and I can do whatever I want to you. I agreed with what she said because I never wanted anything to do with her again.

9. After this happened, I continued to be harassed by men who could see my photos online. Later, in December 2017, a female friend that knew about this history told me that there were still videos of me and pictures on the internet on pornographic websites. This made me leave my job at a Honduran bank in January 2018. I was being harassed a lot online because they also published all my social media information and my phone number. I filed complaints about these websites but honestly I am not 100% sure whether they were taken down because I have not had the courage to look. These experiences were very difficult for me and impacted me a lot.

Involvement in My Church and Threats by Gang Members

10. In May 2013, I became involved in an evangelical church in my neighborhood called MA. A neighbor would always encourage me to go. I tried the church and really liked it. There were a lot of young people there. I always attended church at least twice a week, and sometimes more than that. I went on Wednesdays and Sundays. We would pray, read the

Bible, and dance. My faith has a lot of meaning for me and has helped me through difficult times.

11. From December 2017 to February 2018, I was forced to pay a “tax” to members of the Mara 18. The tax was for using my car and driving it through their territory, but I also believe I was singled out by gang members who were aware of my Christian faith. They were also interested in using my car for their activities—I remember one time I left the car at my cousin’s and I found out that my cousin had used the car to take them somewhere.
12. I was also considering becoming a taxi driver and they mistakenly believed that I had already started this job. They would charge me 500 lempiras every Friday for passing through their zone. One day, February 16, 2018, I got into trouble with them because I refused to pay the tax. They told me to get out of the car, which I did. They took the bumper off my car. I was then attacked and stabbed in my left leg for having refused to pay the tax. There were various gang members there at the time, but I was attacked by two of them. Their nicknames are Toñito and El Jack. They also referenced my Christian faith at the time that they stabbed me, referring to me as “Christian trash” and telling me that they were with the devil. Our church would often pray for the neighborhood to be liberated from gang control, and that is another reason that the gang members did not like me or the church that I attended. In fact, my mother recently told me that gang members entered into that same church months ago and stole all of the musical instruments, the computers, the microphones, and other equipment.
13. After I was stabbed, I sought medical care at the home of a nurse who cleaned the wound and stitched up my leg. I also filed a police report. I initially went to file it at the police station in my neighborhood, but the police there sent me to another station that was quite

far away. Gang members became aware that I had filed this report, which they did not like. The police and the gang members are constantly sharing information and the police are quite corrupt.

14. The gang members then threatened me with death at my house on February 20, 2018, telling me that they did not want to see me again, and that if they ever did they would cut my body into small pieces. I was terrified after I received this threat especially because I knew that the authorities would not do anything to protect me since they had already shared my information with the gang.
15. I decided to come to the United States after I received this death threat. I felt that there was nowhere in Honduras that I could live safely since it is a small country, there are gang members everywhere, and the police are corrupt. I was terrified and feared the worst about what could happen to me if I had to stay in Honduras.

My decision to come to the United States

16. I entered the United States in April 2018 and indicated that I wanted to seek asylum. ICE detained me at the Hutto residential facility in Taylor, Texas, while I waited for my credible fear interview. This interview took place on May 1, 2018. I passed the interview, and I was released from ICE detention on May 25, 2018. I filed for asylum in August 2020 with the immigration court. My case was dismissed by the immigration court in May 2023 and I am now refiling with the asylum office.
17. I am terrified to return to Honduras because of the traumas that I suffered there. I was stabbed, threatened with death, and my personal information was spread widely over the internet. I feel exhausted and upset about the thought of having to return to a place where I suffered so greatly.

18. I also now have a U.S. citizen son K, who is the love of my life. I want do everything I can to keep him safe.

19. I am fluent in Spanish and this declaration was read to me in the Spanish language before I signed it in English.

HEZR

Date