

Katten and McDonald's Pro Bono Team Wins Asylum for Family Fleeing Gang Violence in El Salvador

May 25, 2022

A team of pro bono attorneys from McDonald's and Katten helped secure asylum for a Salvadoran mother and her two children.

The family sought asylum in the United States after the woman fled an abusive relationship with a gang leader from the notorious Mara-18 gang. The woman suffered domestic and gang violence, and had been hunted by El Salvador's gangs for nearly half her life. She initially tried to stay in El Salvador, living in hiding for several years across the country. But she was unable to support herself and her children while also avoiding gang attacks from both Mara-18 and MS-13 gang members.

Finally, the client fled to the United States, where she has been living for over four years awaiting a hearing on her asylum petition. The woman and her children, who were able to join her later, applied for asylum based on their fear of past and future persecution were they to return to El Salvador.

Attorneys from Katten and McDonald's worked on her case for more than a year. McDonald's Associate General Counsel Denise Horne and Katten Litigation partner Ryan J. Meyer and associate Grace Caputo, Private Credit associate Mara Flack, and paralegal Matthew Doran, worked to gather supporting affidavits from the client's family (many of whom were afraid to even speak to the client's lawyers for fear of gang retribution). They also gathered country condition materials, which explained the dire situation for Salvadoran women, especially current and former partners of gang members. And they located a country condition expert to explain to an Immigration Judge what life is like for a woman in El Salvador.

Immediately following a final asylum hearing in early May, the Immigration Judge granted asylum for the client and her two minor children. The government later waived its right to appeal.

CONTACTS

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