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# Hughes Hubbard & Reed

## Firm Helps Congolese Human Rights Lawyer Obtain Asylum

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Hughes Hubbard represented a human rights attorney from the Democratic Republic of Congo on a pro bono basis in her application for asylum in the U.S. After an extensive waiting period due to bureaucratic complications unrelated to her case, she was granted asylum on Nov. 6, 2012.

The client specialized in representing victims of sexual violence in the Congo, and her work often implicated government officials, members of the armed forces and rebel groups. As a result, she received numerous threats against her life and her family suffered the consequences when her would-be attackers could not find her.

Due to her work, members of the military killed her mother in April 2011 and her uncle in January 2012. With years of threats finally escalating to violence, the client was forced to flee for her life to the U.S. in June 2011, and her husband and four children had to go into hiding. A month later, Congolese soldiers attacked the client's home in Kinshasa, where they wounded and raped her younger sister once they realized that the client no longer lived there.

In February, the client was referred to HHR by Human Rights First, a nonprofit organization based in New York and Washington, D.C. HHR attorneys met with the client numerous times to develop the facts, prepare her application and prepare her for an interview in the Arlington Asylum Office in Virginia.

In July, the asylum officer conducting the client's interview was moved to tears by her application, and felt it was not necessary to have the client relive the majority of her tale. The client explained why she felt her life would be endangered if she returned to Congo, and that protecting victims of sexual violence is what she feels she was put on earth to do.

Now that asylum has been secured, the HHR team is working with the client to apply to have her husband and children join her in the U.S. Throughout the entire process, the client has steadfastly volunteered with various women's organizations and taken English lessons. Her English has now improved so significantly since her referral

to HHR that a French interpreter is no longer necessary. She is thrilled to finally have permission to obtain employment legally in the U.S. "Thank you for your graciousness and help," she told HHR in an email.

Associate Kyden Creekpau and paralegals Matthieu Rossignol and Paul Henson assisted from the Paris office, and were instrumental in translating emails and documents into French and English. Additionally, they contributed significantly to research that was invaluable to the final brief that accompanied the client's application. D.C. paralegal Alexandra Britton also played an important role assisting with translation and research. Paralegals Catherine Rizzoni and Alexander Bedrosyan assisted with translation, and paralegal Esteban Munera assisted with filing the brief and exhibits.