

Democratic Republic of the Congo

A team in our New York office obtained asylum for our pro bono client, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). After the 2001 assassination of then-President Laurent Kabila, the DRC Government accused certain ethnic minority groups and perceived political dissidents of complicity in the assassination. Our client's father was an ethnic Tutsi and high-ranking military officer who had served in the armed forces under the pre-Kabila government of Mobutu. He came under suspicion for complicity in the assassination due to his ethnicity and because Mobutu's former loyalists were presumed to be opposed to the Kabila regime. Upon learning that he was implicated, our client's father fled the country. The DRC Government arrested our client (then 18 years old), tortured him for information regarding his father's whereabouts, and then sentenced him to an indefinite term in prison for his father's alleged crimes. Our client was entering the fourth year of his incarceration when a friend of his father's bribed our client's way out of prison and made it possible for him to flee the DRC to the United States. Our client initially was denied asylum by the Department of Homeland Security, and the case was referred to the Immigration Court for the City of New York for de novo review. After a half-day trial on March 5, 2008, the Court granted asylum.