



**PRESS STATEMENT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

Statement on the Group of Haitians seeking Asylum in Jamaica

The Ministry of National Security is making preparations to process applications for asylum for the group of thirty-seven (37) Haitian nationals, of which twenty (29) were convicted of illegal entry to Jamaica, on Tuesday, July 18, 2023 in the Portland Parish Court.

The Ministry is aware that steps are being taken to assist the group with the completion of the required application forms, as a pre-requisite to convening the Eligibility Committee after formal receipt of those applications.

It is expected that this process will be concluded over the next few days, as each applicant has to be interviewed separately, aided by an interpreter to ensure full understanding of the process.

Once the applications are received by the Ministry, the Committee will be convened to undertake the review. As articulated in the 2009 Refugee Policy, the composition of the Committee shall include three persons who shall be senior officers in the Ministries responsible for Immigration, Foreign Affairs and Justice.

The Ministry will also request support from the Attorney General's Chambers in reviewing the applications. Where interviews are deemed necessary to assist with the Committee's review, legal counsel may be present in an observer capacity.

Upon completion of the review, a recommendation will be submitted to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Security, who will consider the findings of the Committee and make a decision in keeping with the options articulated in the Refugee Policy. That Decision is to be communicated to the applicant(s) in writing within ten (10) working days of the decision. The 2009 Refugee Policy may be accessed on the Ministry's website for a detailed description of the options and processes that follow.

Since the group arrived in Jamaica on Monday, July 10, 2023, the Jamaica Constabulary Force commenced its security screening, the Passport Immigration and Citizenship Agency undertook interviews and the Ministry of Health and Wellness completed the necessary health checks. The group has been housed at a campsite in St. Mary, where they have been receiving welfare support from the Disaster Relief Committee of the Municipal Council in partnership with the Red Cross and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Robins Bay. The group is comprised of twenty-four (24) males, five (5) females and eight (8) children.

The Government of Jamaica remains sensitive to the unstable conditions in Haiti and re-affirms its commitment to working to secure positive outcomes for all relevant parties.