



April 6, 2005

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Opposition to Asylum Provisions in REAL ID

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing on behalf of leading organizations devoted to preserving our nation's proud history as a safe haven for religious believers around the world who suffer the horrors of persecution. We also share a commitment to ensuring that our government has every necessary tool in its arsenal to keep our border closed to terrorists who would exploit our freedom to organize and execute attacks.

We are writing to urge your opposition to the asylum provisions in the *REAL ID Act of 2005* (H.R. 418) which could deliver the most vulnerable victims of religious oppression seeking refuge in our country back into the hands of their persecutors to face imprisonment, torture, or even death. The bill, as amended and as passed by the House of Representatives, raises even higher the standard for obtaining asylum in this country than earlier versions of the bill. While applicants should be required to prove their legitimate claim, in the most compelling cases, it is impossible to provide corroborating evidence or to prove the central reason motivating their persecutors. Further, inconsistencies in the testimony of a persecution victim, even those that are irrelevant to her claim, should not be used to deny her refuge.

We understand why, for example, a woman fleeing coercive abortion in China, or a Darfuri Muslim should have to undergo security and background checks and should be required to make a credible case for asylum as they do under current law. We also recognize the need for the rigorous security checks currently in place which, together with common sense reforms in recent years, have drastically reduced the number of asylum claims. We fear that imposing these new restrictions could bar bona-fide refugees from safety without making Americans any safer.

Congress has a responsibility to deliberate and address the pressing issue of immigration reform, yet the supplemental appropriations bill -- critical to our troops in Iraq as well as to humanitarian efforts in Darfur and tsunami-torn nations -- should not be the stage for a protracted debate on asylum.

We urge your continued commitment to ensure that efforts to safeguard our nation from terrorism are balanced with maintaining the ideals of compassion for the persecuted that we are championing all around the world.

Respectfully,

Annigje J. Buwalda
Director
Jubilee Campaign USA

A Vital Voice for Those Suffering in Silence

9689-C Main Street · Fairfax, Virginia 22031-3746 TEL: (703) 503-0791 FAX: (703) 503-0792
St. Johns · Cranleigh Road · Woneresh, Guilford · Surrey, GU5 0QX · United Kingdom TEL: 14-8389-4787 FAX: 14-8389-4797
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