

May 18, 2010

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy,

As 89 faith-based, human rights, legal services and refugee assistance organizations and 99 individual asylum law practitioners, pro bono attorneys, law professors and other experts committed to the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, we are writing to express our support for the Refugee Protection Act of 2010 (S. 3113). Many countries look to the United States as a leader in providing safe haven to refugees and asylum seekers. This legislation addresses areas of the U.S. refugee program and asylum laws and system in urgent need of improvement.

The importance of a robust U.S. refugee resettlement program and a fair, efficient, and humane asylum process cannot be overstated. Over the years, the United States has granted asylum and provided resettlement to millions fleeing persecution. These refugees and asylees have come from Burma, Colombia, Liberia, Iran, Iraq, Rwanda, Russia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, and other places where people have been persecuted for who they are and what they believe. The U.S. refugee program and asylum system are cornerstones of the American ideal to provide safety for the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, in many key areas, the United States is faltering in its commitments, programs have become outdated, and the challenges facing today's refugees and asylum seekers in the United States are daunting.

This year, the United States celebrates the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Refugee Act of 1980, the bipartisan bill that established the legal framework for the refugee and asylum systems. As the U.S. government reflects upon its accomplishments and commits itself to fixing identified problems, the Refugee Protection Act offers a set of practical solutions that would reduce inefficiencies, avoid redundancies, and improve the United States ability to provide protection to refugees and asylum seekers in a timely, effective and humane manner.

This bill would help to ensure that the United States reaffirms its commitment to be a worldwide leader in protecting those fleeing persecution. We thank you for introducing the Refugee Protection Act and offer our support to help ensure that it is enacted promptly.

Sincerely,

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The Advocates for Human Rights

African Services Committee

American Civil Liberties Union

American Immigration Lawyers Association

American Jewish Committee

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

American Middle East Christian Congress

Amnesty International USA

Arab American Institute

Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services (ACCESS)

Asian American Justice Center (AAJC)

ASISTA Immigration Assistance

Center for Gender and Refugee Studies

Center for Victims of Torture

Chaldean Federation of America

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Refugee and Immigration Ministries

Church World Service

Episcopal Migration Ministries

Ethiopian Community Development Council

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Human Rights First

International Rescue Committee

Iraqi American Endowment Center

Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action

Jubilee Campaign USA

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc. (KHRW)

Immigration Equality Action Fund

International Institute

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

Liberty in North Korea | LiNK

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

The National Advocacy Center, Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Center for Transgender Equality

National Council of La Raza

National Immigration Forum

National Immigrant Justice Center

National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)

Physicians for Human Rights

Rabbis for Human Rights-North America

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

Tahirih Justice Center

UNITED SIKHS

U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Women of Reform Judaism

Women's Refugee Commission

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World Organization for Human Rights USA

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