

REFUGEE COUNCIL USA

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February 28, 2006

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lugar:

Millions of refugees around the world languish in camps or urban areas for years or decades, deprived of their rights under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other human rights instruments. These include the right to work, freedom of movement, and recognition as a person before the law. Refugees who enjoy these rights are better prepared for durable solutions.

One way to help ensure that states honor refugees' fundamental human rights is to include refugees expressly in the criteria and objectives of the Millennium Challenge Act. Congressmen Hyde and Lantos introduced H.R. 4014, a bill to reauthorize the Act, which would:

- expressly add "refugees" as persons to whose human and civil rights eligible countries must have a demonstrated commitment;
- replace "citizens" with "individuals" among those that eligible countries must commit to economic policies encouraging to participate in trade and markets; and
- allow the Millennium Challenge Corporation to support "participation of a broad spectrum of independent civil society representatives" in the development and implementation of Compacts.

The undersigned organizations concerned with refugee protection and assistance urge you to make those amendments and to replace references to "the people"—that some have construed to mean only citizens—with the more inclusive "people" in Section 7702(8) and throughout. These changes will put America squarely on the side of refugee freedom and the people of hosting communities.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter. We look forward to hearing what steps you may be taking in this regard.

Respectfully,



C. Richard Parkins
Chair, Refugee Council USA

Director, *Episcopal Migration Ministries*

On behalf of the following organizations:

Gerald Lemelle, Deputy Executive Advocacy Director
Amnesty International USA

Angela Colaiuta, Washington Representative
Center for Victims of Torture

Joseph Roberson, Director
Church World Service/Immigration and Refugee Program

Dr. Tsehay Teferra, Executive Director
Ethiopian Community Development Council

Neil Greenbaum, President & CEO
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)

Cha Lee, Executive Director
Hmong National Development

Eleanor Acer, Director, Asylum Program
Human Rights First

Johan Ketelers, Secretary General
International Catholic Migration Commission

George Rupp, President
International Rescue Committee

Fr. Kenneth Gavin, S.J., National Director
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Dr. Pary Karadaghi, Executive Director
Kurdish Human Rights Watch, Inc.

Ralston H. Deffenbaugh, Jr., President
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Doua Thor, Executive Director
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

Lavinia Limón, President & CEO
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Carolyn Makinson, Executive Director
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

R. Timothy Ziemer, Rear Admiral, USN (ret.)
Executive Director of Programs
World Relief

cc: Senator Joseph R. Biden, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee