



The American Jewish Committee

Office of Government and International Affairs

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March 14, 2005

Dear Senator:

I write on behalf of the American Jewish Committee, the nation's oldest human relations organization with more than 150,000 members and supporters represented by 33 chapters nationwide, to urge you to oppose the REAL ID Act of 2005 (H.R.418).

Section 101 of the REAL ID Act imposes onerous new obstacles on legitimate asylum seekers and refugees seeking refuge from persecution, exposing them to an increased danger of deportation back into the hands of those who seek to harm them. In particular, Section 101 would:

- Empower immigration officers and judges with broad discretion to deny asylum based on the refugee's inability to track down corroborating evidence that the official believes to be accessible – even if obtaining a particular document would put the refugee in mortal danger;
- Require a refugee to somehow prove persecutors' "central motive" for their actions; and
- Authorize immigration officers to deny asylum based on perceived "demeanor" and alleged "statements" offered under a variety of unreliable circumstances.

As an organization representing a religious minority that has known persecution for too much of its history, we are committed to America fulfilling her role of providing safe haven to those fleeing from religious and other forms of persecution.

We recognize the difficulty in achieving the delicate balance that will safeguard American values of civil liberties, due process and privacy, while also preventing those who would do us harm from entering this country. But section 101 the REAL ID Act will not promote increased national security and protection from terrorism, whether at home or abroad, and its provisions are contrary to American core values that recognize that we are a nation of immigrants. We need to devote resources to stopping terrorists in a manner that rightly scrutinizes those seeking refugee or asylee status while not placing dubious and onerous restrictions in the path of legitimate refugees and asylees.

In short, legitimate refugees and asylees—including torture victims, women and children—will be harmed by the over-reaching provisions of Section 101. These provisions would deny basic due process in the application of American law, place an unrealistic burden of proof on victims of persecution, and set a dangerous precedent that is not in America's interests. We urge you to reject the REAL ID Act.

Respectfully,

Richard T. Foltin
Legislative Director and Counsel