

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON - The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) will present its 2005 Arthur C. Helton Human Rights Award to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), its Expedited Removal Study experts, and their team of researchers on June 25. The Award was established in 1983 to recognize outstanding service in advancing the cause of human rights and is being presented to the Commission in recognition of the Expedited Removal Study and USCIRF's efforts to promote the protection of asylum seekers who flee to the United States. The Award will be presented at the annual conference of the AILA in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In February the Commission released the findings of a *Report on Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal* and recommendations for the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice. Congress authorized the USCIRF to appoint experts to conduct a study examining how Expedited Removal is implemented and if the process is sufficiently protecting all legitimate asylum seekers. Congress asked for the study to examine whether asylum seekers subject to Expedited Removal are being detained under inappropriate conditions and whether they are being returned to countries where they might face persecution.

The study found that while DHS has established several sound procedures and practices for asylum seekers in Expedited Removal, there are also serious and systemic problems in the

implementation of the process relating to the protections enacted by Congress. Some of these problems may result in the improper removal of refugees to countries where they may face persecution. In addition, asylum seekers are being detained in inappropriate conditions. Poor intra- and inter-agency coordination at and between the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice has hampered the resolution of these problems, and Expedited Removal has been expanded despite these flaws. This study provides recommendations to address these problems, and examines issues of concern to all asylum seekers in Expedited Removal, not just those fleeing religious persecution.

Founded in 1946, AILA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides its members with continuing legal education, information, professional services, and expertise through its 35 chapters and over 50 national committees. AILA is an Affiliated Organization of the American Bar Association and is represented in the ABA House of Delegates.

To access the Commission's *Report on Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal*, visit our web site at www.uscirf.gov www.aila.org

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Preeta D. Bansal
- Felice D. Gaer