

Material Support Press
Updated July 2006

THE PATRIOT ACT'S TERRIBLE TOLL

Stranded

The New Republic

Anna Husarska

July 24, 2006

Ban Don Yang Camp, Thailand

They had already sold or given away their mosquito nets and rice rations when the bad news arrived. It was late September 2005 in the Ban Don Yang refugee camp, located on Thailand's western border and home to thousands of ethnic Karen refugees fleeing Burma's brutal military dictatorship. Among those refugees were 25 who had been slated for resettlement in the United States. One, a chubby, white-haired farmer, was bound for Utica, New York, where he hoped to seek medical attention for his half-paralyzed 18-year-old daughter. Another, a baby-faced 28-year-old, was planning to reunite with his mother, father, brother, and sister in Amarillo, Texas; he had not seen them in six years, since taking up arms to fight with a Burmese opposition group. Then there was a rice-picker who had served time in a notorious Burmese jail. For once, his future looked bright: His five-year-old son was going to grow up an American.

Post-9/11 Law Keeps Colombian Refugees Out Of US

The Christian Science Monitor

Mike Ceaser, Correspondent Of The Christian Science Monitor

July 11, 2006

LAGO AGRIO, ECUADOR

The group of men who ate in Maria's restaurant in her Colombian border town seemed no different from other rural workers. But when she asked them to pay, their tall, bearded leader kicked down her door and tried to kidnap her two sons. Then the men, who Maria now knows belonged to a left-wing guerrilla group considered terrorists by the United States, ordered Maria to abandon her home and business within 48 hours.

When the law is the obstacle for refugees

The Boston Globe

Anna Husarska (op-ed)

July 3, 2006

AT FIRST SIGHT, Kuala Lumpur is the Geneva of Southeast Asia, with its elegant Petronas Twin Towers, impeccable lawns, malls, and fast-food chains. It has a touch of zaniness, too. The day I arrived, the newspaper headlines read: ``Robbery foiled, but cop loses gun" and ``Robber fired twice at cop . . . and missed."

Immigration of Another Stripe: Refugees considered terrorists under laws

The Boise Weekly

Carissa Wolf

June 21, 2006

He's told the story so many times: He told Ghana government officials he boarded a ship with 16,000 other refugees. He told U.S. immigration workers how he took refuge in Ghana from war-torn Liberia. He told refugee aid volunteers how he waited almost 16 years for a place to call home. His regal accent accompanies his calming voice as he tells the story again: It was 1989 when the war started. It was October 6, 1990, when he and his sister went to the market. They returned to their Monrovia home to find they were homeless. A rebel group had flattened the family home with a bomb.

Refugees From Oppressive Regimes Kept Out

Legal Times

T.R. Goldman

June 12, 2006

In 1993 a Mandingo family in Liberia was kidnapped by rebels working for Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president now facing war crimes charges in the Hague. The wife and her 13-year-old daughter were repeatedly raped and, with the husband and three other children, forced to work for two weeks as slaves for the rebels, fetching water and cooking for them.

Law lumps together terrorists and victims

Miami Herald

Robert Carey (op-ed)

June 7, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/opinion/14758865.htm>

If John F. Kennedy were not a U.S. citizen and had to ask for refugee status in today's United States, he would be turned back by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

Excluding Friends

The Senate moves to keep branding human rights victims as terrorists.

Washington Post (editorial)

May 30, 2006

THE SENATE HAD an opportunity last week to fix the horrendous mess Congress has inadvertently made out of the law governing the admission of refugees to the United States. In an overwhelming, bipartisan vote, it passed it up -- much to its shame. The body voted 79 to 19 to reject an amendment put forth by Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) that would have restored discretion to the government to admit human rights victims bizarrely branded under current law as terrorists or supporters of terrorism.

Blaming Terror's Victims

U.S. law unfairly denies refugee to those forced to help rebels.

Legal Times

Jennie Pasquarella (opinion)

May 30, 2006

Law Said Confuses Refugees, Terrorists

Associated Press

Cara Anna

May 11, 2006

Some of Nyunt Win's friends, who once fought with rebel groups in Myanmar and now live in refugee camps, hope to join him in the United States. But they may not make it.

Myanmar refugees get permission to enter U.S.

International Herald Tribune

Rachel L. Swarns

May 5, 2006

WASHINGTON After months of deliberation, the Bush administration has agreed to move forward with the resettlement of thousands of previously banned refugees from Myanmar, a State Department official said.

U.S. Eases Curbs on Resettling Burmese Refugees

Rachel L. Swarns

New York Times

May 5, 2006

WASHINGTON, May 4 — After months of deliberation, the Bush administration has agreed to move forward with the resettlement of thousands of Burmese refugees, a State Department official said Thursday.

Less hope, a longer wait - Refugee policy

America is treating more refugees as terrorist suspects

[The Economist](#)

April 29, 2006

JUST as the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is reporting that the world's refugee population has fallen to 9.2m, the lowest for 25 years, the agency has also sounded a note of alarm. Some governments, it says, are indifferent or intolerant towards those still in need: refugees, asylum-seekers and those internally displaced within their own countries. Among the offenders is the government of the United States.

How Not to Treat Friends; Once the Montagnards of Vietnam fought alongside American troops. Now Congress calls them terrorists.

The Washington Post (editorial)

April 28, 2006

CONGRESS tightened a law last year on refugee admissions in order (it thought) to keep terrorists and their supporters out of the country. The effect has been to bar friends and allies. One example: Many Vietnamese Montagnards fought alongside U.S. forces during the Vietnam War and were then murderously oppressed by the Vietnamese government. During the war, the United States helped arm a Montagnard group called the United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races, which continued to struggle for autonomy after the war ended. This group ceased to exist in 1992, when a band of nearly 400 fighters disarmed and were resettled in North Carolina. Under Congress's irrational new rules, however, the group has become, legally speaking, a terrorist organization, and 11 Montagnards still stuck in Cambodia would be denied refugee status because in the past they had offered the group "material support."

A Man Named Lincoln, Who Wants to Be an American

Washington Post

Anna Husarska (op-ed)

April 22, 2006

THAM HIN CAMP, Thailand -- For the past nine years, this ravine 100 miles west of Bangkok has been "home" to 9,325 ethnic Karens from Burma. All of the huts here are made entirely of bamboo, which gives it a sort of Pier 1 Imports look. It is, however, not for aesthetic but for political reasons that bamboo is used. Anything else would be a "permanent home," and the Thai government insists that Tham Hin, a remote, overcrowded camp near the Burmese border, be only a very temporary shelter.

Fix This Law

Congress made a mess of refugee law, and a lot of human rights victims could suffer

Washington Post (editorial)

April 17, 2006; A12

IF CONGRESS DOESN'T quickly fix a major problem it created in the law governing the admission of refugees, tens of thousands of human rights victims will soon begin paying the price. Congress, we assume, never meant to rewrite federal law so that victims of totalitarian regimes and those forced to serve human rights abusers are kept out of the United States. Yet an accumulation of legal changes in recent years, culminating in the Real ID Act last year, has done just that -- paralyzing America's traditionally generous refugee admission program. The United States is supposed to admit up to 70,000 refugees this year, though it probably will take around 55,000 under the best of circumstances. Yet human rights advocates estimate that between 10,000 and 20,000 people may be barred because of irrationally broad legal definitions of terrorism, support for terrorism and

terrorist groups -- definitions that make no distinction between this country's enemies and those it ought to protect.

**How antiterror laws harm the world's vulnerable
Pro-democracy refugees are being kept in limbo.**

Christian Science Monitor
Frederick Barton (op-ed)
April 17, 2006

(WASHINGTON) Almost five years ago, a teenage Burmese farmer on his way home from selling cows in India was stopped by a group of rebel soldiers from his region. Dressed in Chin National Army (CNA) uniforms, they asked the young man to deliver a sealed letter to the chairman of his village. While reluctant, he eventually "gave in," and a long journey began.

Patriot Act bars Cuban rebels from asylum

Miami Herald
Pablo Bachelet
April 13, 2006

WASHINGTON - Four decades ago, thousands of Cubans took to the Escambray mountains in a CIA-backed guerrilla war against Fidel Castro. Today, U.S. law brands them as terrorists. In an ironic twist of fate, 320 Cubans on the island with links to that armed revolt are now having problems winning U.S. political asylum because the Patriot Act bars that status for terrorists and people who help them.

The resigned victims of Burma's junta (related to material support)

BBC News
Andrew Harding
April 15, 2006

Troops in Burma have stepped up a military offensive against the Karen rebel group in the east of the country. Andrew Harding says the situation has been complicated by the military government's relocation of the capital from Rangoon to Pyinmana and that civilians are being caught in the middle.

Homeland Security's Catch-22 for Exiles
'Ridiculous' interpretation of law bars thousands.

Christianity Today
Madison Trammel
April 5, 2006

About 9,500 Burmese refugees have had their resettlement to the U.S. postponed indefinitely. They were scheduled to be resettled this year, but now have to wait for a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) waiver.

Terrorists or Victims?

New York Times (editorial)
April 3, 2006

In Sierra Leone there is a woman who was kept captive in her house for four days by guerrillas. The rebels raped her and her daughter and cut them with machetes. Under America's program to resettle refugees, she would be eligible to come to safety in the United States. But her application for refuge has been put on indefinite hold - because American law says that she provided "material support" to terrorists by giving them shelter.

Let Us Not Deny Refuge To Victims of Terrorism

The Forward
Gideon Aronoff (op-ed)
March 31, 2006

In an absurd twist, America's anti-terrorism laws are now being used to deny protection to refugees fleeing some of the most brutal regimes and violent conflicts on earth. Shockingly, under today's laws, Jews who bravely resisted Nazi terror—and who as a
In an absurd twist, America's anti-terrorism laws are now being used to deny protection to refugees fleeing some of the most brutal regimes and violent conflicts on earth. Shockingly, under today's laws Jews who bravely resisted Nazi terror and survived to tell about it would have faced exclusion when they sought refuge in the United States.

U.S. unintentionally dims lamp for persecuted refugees

The Virginian-Pilot
Bronwyn Lance Chester
March 30, 2006

What do Nelson Mandela, Moses and George Washington all have in common?

Under obscure provisions in the recently renewed Patriot Act and the Real ID Act, none of them could seek shelter or citizenship in the United States. While the hypothetical question sounds like the setup line for a bad joke, the reality is no laughing matter. For years, known terrorists have been barred from entering the country. That's a good thing. And last year, when Congress passed Real ID, it strengthened laws that exclude terrorist donors or anyone providing such groups with "material support." That's good, too. Terrorist bank-rollers shouldn't be living off the fat of our land.

Terrorist or terrorized?

Los Angeles Times
George Rupp (op-ed)
March 29, 2006

IN HIS SECOND inaugural address, President Bush made a stirring commitment to

oppressed people yearning to be free: "When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."

Real Injustice

Washington Post (editorial)
March 18, 2006

WHEN CONGRESS passed the Real ID Act last year, it presumably did not intend to prevent human rights victims all over the world from entering the United States. Its goal was to keep terrorists and those who support them from resettling in the United States as refugees. The legislative language, however, was irresponsibly broad; its effects have been cruel to people already oppressed by vile regimes and terrorist groups. The law needs to be changed.

Provision of Antiterror Law Delays Entry of Refugees

New York Times
Rachel L. Swarns
March 8, 2006

WASHINGTON, March 7 — About 9,500 Burmese refugees scheduled to be resettled in the United States from Thailand this year are in limbo because their indirect support for armed rebels opposed to their repressive government has put them in technical violation of American antiterrorism law, government officials say.

U.S. Terrorism Laws Cited as Unfair Bar to Some Needy Refugees

Catholic News Service
Patricia Zapor
February 9, 2006

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- A spokeswoman for the Catholic Church's refugee resettlement programs called on the U.S. government to change how some anti-terrorism laws are applied because they are keeping refugees from Myanmar from being admitted.

Anti-Terrorism Laws Impeding Asylum Seekers

All Things Considered/National Public Radio
Jennifer Ludden
January 25, 2006

MELISSA BLOCK, host:

Along with the war on terror abroad, the U.S. government has been carrying out a legal crackdown. It has broadened the definition of a terrorist group and what constitutes **support** for terror. Now refugee advocates say this is wrongly denying hundreds of people asylum in the U.S. and it could affect thousands more waiting to have their cases heard. NPR's Jennifer Ludden has the story.

ARTICLES

Providing Material Support: The Pentagon, The Department of State, The People's Mujehedin of Iran and the Global War on Terrorism

Margaret D. Stock

May 15, 2006

The Ever-Expanding Material Support Bar: An Unjust Obstacle for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Interpreter Releases

Susan Benesch and Devon Chaffee

April 13, 2006

The "Material Support" Problem: An Uncertain Future for Thousands of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Bender's Immigration Bulletin

Melanie Nezer

December 15, 2005