

**Press Office**  
**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

Press Release  
January 12, 2007  
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Statement by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff ON THE INTENTION TO use DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY for MATERIAL SUPPORT to terrorism

The United States of America has a great legacy as a welcoming nation to legitimate refugee and asylum seekers from around the world. Indeed, America has traditionally welcomed more refugee and asylum seekers than any other nation in the world. The federal government has upheld that tradition while working hard to eliminate the risk of unintentionally admitting a potentially dangerous and fraudulent petitioner in a post-9/11 world.

A select group of foreign nationals have been unable to pursue the protections provided by our refugee and asylum laws because they have been uniquely victimized by terrorist groups. This group as a whole does not represent a threat to our homeland security. I, therefore, will exercise my discretionary authority to permit consideration of applications for refugee status, asylum or adjustment of status from some who have provided material support to groups while under duress.

I have also decided, in consultation with the Departments of State and Justice, to exercise my discretionary authority under the Immigration and Nationality Act to not apply material support to terrorism provisions to those seeking asylum or adjustment of status that have provided support to eight groups. They are: the Karen National Union and Karen National Liberation Army, Chin National Front and Chin National Army, Chin National League for Democracy, Kayan New Land Party, Arakan Liberation Party, Tibetan Mustangs, Cuban Alzados, and Karenni National Progressive Party.

The material support to terrorism exemption will apply to individuals who do not represent a public safety or national security risk to the United States. In addition to exempting from the material support bar eligible individuals in these two categories, the federal government will also seek legislation from Congress to further expand our discretionary exemption authority. We are deeply committed to ensuring that those who deserve humanitarian relief from our immigration system receive it, and that America continues to be a beacon of hope and protection for the persecuted.

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