

U.S. curbs asylum for immigrant victims of violence and abuse



Washington, June 12 (RHC)-- The Donald Trump administration will stop granting asylum to victims of gang violence and domestic abuse as it believes they generally do not qualify for asylum under federal law.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Monday overturned a grant of asylum to a female Salvadoran domestic abuse victim, potentially excluding immigrants seeking refuge from sexual, gang and other forms of violence in their home countries.

"Generally, claims by aliens pertaining to domestic violence or gang violence perpetrated by non-governmental actors will not qualify for asylum," Sessions wrote in his decision. "The mere fact that a country may have problems effectively policing certain crimes -- such as domestic violence or gang violence -- or that certain populations are more likely to be victims of crime, cannot itself establish an asylum claim," he continued.

Immigrant rights advocates say the decision will endanger tens of thousands of foreign nationals seeking safety in the United States. The American Immigration Council, a non-profit immigrant advocacy group, said Sessions is "taking away a vital lifeline" for victims of severe domestic and gang violence. "Today's decision by the attorney general is yet another attempt to close our doors," said Beth Werlin, executive director of the American Immigration Council. "Turning our backs on victims of violence and deporting

them to grave danger should not be the legacy sought by any administration."

"The Trump administration just handed a death sentence to thousands of women and families fleeing domestic and gang violence by barring them from accessing asylum in the United States," said Jess Morales Rocketto, political director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

"Trump, Sessions and the Trump administration jeopardize the safety of the women they are ignoring who need help. This administration is no better than neighbors who ignore cries and pleas from a woman being assaulted next door," she added.

Michelle Brane, director of the Women's Refugee Commission's Migrant Rights and Justice program headquartered in New York, said, "This administration continues to swiftly deconstruct America's moral code and values by doing everything possible to limit access to asylum."

The announcement also drew criticism from lawmakers as well. Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut said in a statement: "Attorney General Sessions: their blood is on your hands."

Minority House leader Nancy Pelosi joined those denouncing the decision, saying: "The Trump Administration's inhumanity and heartlessness know no bounds." And Pelosi continued: "Republicans in the White House have just condemned countless vulnerable, innocent women to a lifetime of violence and even death, just to score political points with their base."

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