

Human Rights First

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/questions-remain-following-sessions-confirmation-hearing>

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Areas of Focus

Current Initiatives

Washington, D.C. Following yesterday's Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing for Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL), nominee for Attorney General, Human Rights First said that it will hold him accountable for enforcing and upholding the law as he has pledged to do, and cautioned that important questions remain on issues of refugee protection and national security. The organization also expressed alarm over his claims of support for indefinite detention of detainees at Guantanamo Bay.

Senator Sessions made important pledges yesterday to enforce the ban on waterboarding and other forms of torture, to enforce hate crimes laws as they apply to all groups including crimes against LGBT people, and to reject a religious ban on entrance to the United States. If Senator Sessions is confirmed we will hold him accountable to these commitments, said Human Rights First **Sharon McBride**. However Sessions' comments in support of Gitmo fly in the face of national security experts who have repeatedly made the case that the continued operation of the facility makes us less safe. Senators should strongly consider the dangers of its continued operation while determining how to vote on this nomination.

When asked about Guantanamo, Senator Sessions said he would support the continued operation of the facility, saying that it fits that purpose marvelously well. National security leaders and former government officials including President George W. Bush, and other officials who helped set up the detention center have supported closing Guantanamo because they've determined that its operation is contrary to the national interest. There are 55 detainees held at Guantanamo, which costs approximately \$445 million per year to operate, more than \$7 million per detainee. Nineteen detainees have been unanimously cleared for transfer by six national security and intelligence agencies.

Human Rights First notes that on issues of refugee protection, many questions remain regarding Senator Sessions' intentions to uphold U.S. obligations to protect refugees and asylum seekers under the Refugee Protocol and U.S. immigration law. The hearing failed to address what steps Sessions would take to make sure that the United States complies with U.S. treaty and legal obligations relating to refugee protection and to ensure that refugees have access to the U.S. asylum process.

The United States has a long history of welcoming the persecuted to find refuge on our shores. In the post of chief law enforcement officer in the country, it is critical that Sessions make clear he will uphold the rights of asylum seekers to protection, added McBride.

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Backgrounder: Steven G. Bradbury

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Biden to Visit Saudi: Recalibration of the Relationship or Rehabilitation of MBS?

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Urge Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act

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