

Human Rights First

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/audio-recording-reveals-border-agents-turning-back-asylum-seekers>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Work With Asylum Seekers

If you are seeking asylum, we can help

Areas of Focus

Current Initiatives

Washington, D.C. Human Rights First today released an [audio recording](#) of a Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agent repeatedly turning away asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border, a violation of U.S. law and treaty commitments. The audio was recorded at the San Ysidro port of entry in California. The family, from Honduras, was later admitted and processed as refugees.

The audio released today is a stark confirmation of what Human Rights First has reported: that CBP agents are illegally turning back vulnerable individuals seeking protection from violence and persecution, said Human Rights First's **Shaw Drake**.

On February 4, 2017, American immigration advocates accompanied a Honduran family to the U.S. border crossing in San Ysidro, California and recorded their interactions with CBP agents. The family presented themselves to CBP informing them that they were seeking asylum and asking to be processed. The CBP agents they encountered forcefully told the family that they could not be processed at this port of entry and must instead check in with the Mexican National Institute for Migration (INM) who would register them for processing. Although the family reported that they had tried to present once before and went to INM and were offered no help, the CBP agent remained insistent that they would not process asylum seekers from countries other than Mexico unless they were referred through INM. Following repeated questioning by an accompanying advocate about the legality of this approach and the insistence of the advocate that the family had a right to be processed, the CBP agent brought in a supervisor who eventually took the family for processing. The recording was provided to Human Rights First by the advocate, and Human Rights First did not direct, control, advise, or otherwise participate in the making of the recording.

Last month Human Rights First released a major [report](#) documenting dozens of instances in which U.S. border agents illegally turned away asylum seekers from the U.S. southern border. The report, [Crossing the Line](#), was based on 125 cases of asylum seekers turned away at ports of entry by CBP agents in violation of U.S. law and treaty obligations. CBP spokespersons' [statements](#) following the reports release further confirmed CBPs responsibility to uphold U.S. legal obligations to receive and process asylum seekers.

In the wake of the Trump Administration's original travel ban, some CBP officers illegally turned away asylum seekers at ports of entry across the U.S.-Mexico border. Shortly following the orders, attorneys in Texas reported CBP agents at the Hidalgo port of entry told asylum seekers, Trump says we don't have to let you in. In February 2017, CBP agents at the Ped-West entry point told an asylum seeker that the United States is not giving asylum anymore. Another CBP officer told one asylum seeker, they are killing people who are Christians. Those are the people we are giving asylum to, not people like you. You don't qualify. Some media [reports](#) also indicated CBP agents turned away asylum seekers at major U.S. airports, including a Syrian woman who sought asylum after her visa was unexpectedly revoked.

The full audio can be found at the following [link](#). For a shortened version, please see Human Rights First's [video](#).

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