

Human Rights First

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/border-reporting-gaining-traction>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Work With Asylum Seekers

If you are seeking asylum, we can help

Areas of Focus

Current Initiatives

Human Rights First has been researching conditions for asylum seekers at the U.S. southern border, and our findings are gaining traction. Yesterday at a Congressional hearing, Senator Richard Blumenthal questioned Ronald Vitiello, the Acting Deputy Commissioner for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), about cases we documented of asylum seekers being turned away by U.S. border officers at ports of entry.

Our report, [Crossing the Line](#), is based on 125 cases of individual asylum seekers and families who were unlawfully turned away at official ports of entry across the southern border without referring them, as required under U.S. law and treaty commitments, to asylum protection screenings or immigration court proceedings. The report notes, In the wake of the election and President Trump's January executive orders relating to refugees, CBP agents have in some cases claimed the United States is no longer accepting asylum seekers.

The report's findings have been covered in [The New York Times](#), [The Miami Herald](#), the [Dallas Morning News](#), the [Arizona Republic](#), [NBCNews.com](#), and more.

At the hearing before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary's Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration, Senator Blumenthal stated: I think that probably most fundamental to some of American values is the idea of asylum for people who are seeking to escape persecution, and asked whether CBP was aware of the reports of agents blocking or dissuading individuals from seeking asylum.

Vitiello stated that the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General is investigating and that some cases would be turned over to the Office of Professional Responsibility. Vitiello also confirmed that when border officers encounter people expressing fear of return, they are to be referred to the proper authorities to adjudicate a credible fear determination, and that a failure to do so would be misconduct.

Human Rights First legal researchers are currently at the border again, meeting with asylum seekers, local groups, and pro bono lawyers, and have learned that some border agents are continuing the unlawful practice of turning away asylum seekers. Human Rights First will continue to press for the United States to comply with its legal and moral obligations to protect refugees who have fled from persecution.

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