

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/02/us-bill-would-shut-doors-central-americans>

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Legislation Would Effectively End Asylum at Southern Border

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(Washington, DC) The [United States](#) Senate Judiciary Committee on August 1, 2019, forwarded a bill to the full Senate that would all but shut US doors to Central American refugees, Human Rights Watch said today. The [Secure and Protect Act](#) (S.1494), introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham, would transform the Trump administrations draconian administrative measures into law, preventing Central Americans, particularly children and families, from seeking or obtaining asylum.

The bill would essentially extinguish the right of Central Americans to seek asylum, replacing it with an entirely discretionary refugee resettlement program. The resettlement program allows the United States to admit refugees from overseas but does not require it to do so. The change would leave the vast majority of Central American refugees unprotected.

Senator Grahams bill would codify the cruel instincts of a president intent on scapegoating and vilifying refugees, said [Bill Frelick](#), refugee rights director at Human Rights Watch. This bill would make it that much harder to undo the great damage this administration has already done to Central American child refugees and their families.

The Graham bill would establish refugee application and processing centers in Mexico and three locations in Central America. Any national or resident of a Central American country that has such a center or who lives in an adjacent country would be ineligible for asylum in the United States. As a result, no one from Central America who could have applied for refugee admission in those countries would be allowed to seek asylum on arrival in the United States.

Through the first three-quarters of this fiscal year, which ends September 30, the United States has chosen to admit only [306 Central American refugees](#). The Trump administration has already cut global refugee admissions by 65 percent, from a ceiling of 85,000 in the last year of the Obama presidency to 30,000 this year. Some officials in the administration have reportedly proposed [cutting the refugee admissions ceiling to zero](#) in the coming year.

Senator Grahams bill pushes Central Americans toward what is already an increasingly inaccessible overseas resettlement program, overriding their right, including for children, to seek asylum at the border, Frelick said. Overseas refugee admissions are only a supplement to the right to seek asylum, not a substitute.

The Secure and Protect Act contains many other rights-undermining provisions, Human Rights Watch said. These include:

Real solutions that are sustainable and humane would need to involve addressing the root causes of conflict and abuse that displace people and developing safe and orderly pathways to seek protection, including upholding the right to seek asylum, Frelick said. The Secure and Protect Act does none of these things, and the full US Senate should reject it.

Human Rights Watch / ACLU Joint Submission Regarding the United States Record Under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Asylum Seekers Abused in the US and Deported to Harm in Cameroon

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