

# Human Rights First

## Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/immigration-court-backlog-tops-500000-cases>

### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Work With Asylum Seekers

If you are seeking asylum, we can help

Areas of Focus

Current Initiatives

New York CityAs the backlog at U.S. immigration courts tops [half a million cases](#), Human Rights First renews its calls for Congress to adequately fund, and for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to hire, immigration judge positions in an effort to reduce wait times.

Even as the immigration court hires new judges to the bench, the backlog continues to rise at unsustainable rates, said Human Rights Firsts Shaw Drake. The delays leave people in limbo for years. Families cant start to rebuild their lives until their cases are resolved; they struggle to survive, and they cant reunite with their families, who may still live in danger.

The reports that the immigration backlog has topped 500,000 cases comes as the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) recently announced that it swore in 15 judges in June, bringing the total number of judges on the bench to 273, a new high for the court. Human Rights First notes, however, that EOIR still needs to fill all 374 positions currently funded by Congress, and that a total of 524 judges are required to eliminate the backlog and adjudicate incoming cases in a timely manner. The House of Representatives has included funding for 25 new immigration judge teams in their Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bill but the Senate has not included funding for any new immigration judge teams. We welcome the House recognition of the need for more judgesbut25 is still far fewer than is needed to fully address the problem. Human Rights First recommends that 75 judge teams be added each year in Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018.

Earlier this year Human Rights First released a [report](#) detailing how chronic underfunding, hiring challenges, and shifting enforcement strategies have led to alarming backlogs in the U.S. asylum and immigration systems with more than 620,000 pending removal and asylum cases, exposing vulnerable asylum seekers and their families to combined wait times of up to six years for resolution of their claims. The report, [In the Balance](#), includes recommendations for the U.S. government to address these backlogs by providing adequate staffing levels and resources to lessen wait times that hurt asylum seekers and threaten to undermine the integrity of the system.

Findings from [In the Balance](#) are informed by detailed analysis of data along with in-depth interviews with asylum seekers, legal service providers, and mental health professionals, and meetings with former and current government officials. The report details the impact of these long delays on asylum seekers and their families. The report finds that the immigration courts are woefully understaffed, detailing how without additional judges the backlog will reach 1 million in fiscal year 2022. As a result, hundreds of thousands of immigrants are facing lengthy wait times for their cases to be heard. In some states, such as Texas, immigrants and asylum seekers must wait nearly five years for their cases to be resolved.

For more information or to speak with Drake contact Corinne Duffy [\[emailprotected\]](#) or 202-370-3319.

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Urge Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act

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