

## **DETENTION OF REFUGEES IN TEXAS OK'D**

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### **Body**

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BROWNSVILLE, **Texas** - A federal judge ruled Friday that the Justice Department could resume **detention** of Central American **refugees** who have been crossing into **Texas** by the thousands. Without comment, U.S. District Judge Filemon Vela lifted a temporary restraining order that had allowed applicants for political asylum to travel outside the Rio Grande Valley while waiting for permission to remain in the United States. The ruling means the Immigration and Naturalization Service may reimpose a travel ban on thousands of Central Americans applying for asylum in the United States. Immigration officials have indicated that they will reimpose the travel ban but have yet to announce formally a plan for housing **refugees** confined in the Rio Grande Valley. A congressman has said the immigration agency would set up a "tent-city" **detention** camp, but the agency said that was only one of several options under consideration. "Now we can get on with the overall plans we have to deal with the situation," Omer Sewell, immigration service district director, said Friday. He would not say what the plans were. "We think that's going to create a multitude of problems here in the (Lower Rio Grande) Valley," said Mark Schneider of Harlingen, one of the lawyers who sued the government over the matter. Immigration attorney Linda Yanez of Brownsville, who sued with Schneider, appealed Vela's ruling Friday and sought an injunction pending the appeal, but Vela denied the injunction Friday afternoon. Yanez said she would seek an emergency stay through the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

Brownsville Mayor Ygnacio Garza said he was unhappy with the ruling. "We still think the federal government has an obligation to help house and feed and take care of the medical needs of the Central Americans who now in all likelihood will begin accumulating again beginning next week," he said. Vela's ruling gave **refugees** in the Harlingen district until midnight Monday to submit asylum claims to immigration officials and to get permission to proceed to their final destinations. The immigration service estimates that more than 100,000 Central Americans will pour into the area this year after crossing the Rio Grande illegally near Brownsville. More than 40,000 asylum applicants, most bound for Miami and Los Angeles, have filed through the Harlingen Immigration Service office since May 3. Until mid-December, the **refugees** underwent preliminary processing and then were allowed to await decisions on their claims with family or friends in other cities. (3\* Edition continuation) Backlogs of up to 50,000 cases in Miami and Los Angeles prompted the immigration service on Dec. 16 to impose a travel ban on asylum applicants in southern **Texas**. The policy stranded thousands of **refugees** with no means of support and most found shelter in squatter settlements or abandoned buildings. On Jan. 6 immigration attorneys filed a class-action lawsuit challenging the government policy and Vela signed a temporary restraining order three days later to pave the way for an exodus of **refugees**.

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