

Letter sent to Reps. Berman and Delahunt and Sens. Leahy, Kennedy, Corzine, Feingold and Durbin upon introduction of the Civil Liberties Restoration Act (CLRA) of 2004

June 16, 2004

Dear Representatives and Senators:

The undersigned organizations write to express our support for the Civil Liberties Restoration Act (CLRA) of 2004. Our organizations represent a diverse and growing movement in communities nationwide who believe that the United States can meet new security demands while preserving fundamental liberties and American values of fairness and equal treatment for all. Although we differ in our missions and mandates, we come together around these principles to endorse this important legislation.

Many of the actions taken by Congress, the Administration, and law enforcement in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks represent reasonable responses to the terrorist threat. However, other measures violated basic liberties. For example, after September 11th, hundreds of Arab and Muslim immigrants with no connection to terrorism were arrested and detained for weeks and months. The jailed individuals' names were withheld from the public and their deportation hearings kept secret – in short, a system of secret detention that fosters abuse. A Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General report subsequently confirmed that many were held for prolonged periods without charge; that the DOJ adopted a policy of denying bond to every detainee without any evidence of connections to terrorism or risk of flight; that many were denied access to a lawyer and held in excessively harsh conditions; and that some were physically and verbally abused by prison guards.

These and other measures do not enhance national security; rather, they violate our tradition of due process, alienate immigrant communities, and undermine U.S. efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law abroad. The CLRA will help protect core values at home while demonstrating to the world that the United States takes seriously the rights of people it detains. The CLRA will:

End the government's ability to issue a blanket order closing all deportation hearings to the public and to family members of detainees, while permitting the closure of hearings or a portion of hearings on a case-by-case basis to preserve the confidentiality of asylum applications or when national security interests so require.

Provide minimum due process safeguards to individuals who are jailed on suspicion of immigration violations by giving them timely notice of the charges against them and assure that immigration authorities and judges make fair, individualized bond determinations.

Establish an independent immigration court within the Department of Justice and promote fair hearings by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal.

Facilitate better law enforcement practices by requiring that the National Crime Information Center database relied upon daily by state and local law enforcement complies with minimum accuracy requirements.

Terminate the troubled National Security Entry-Exit Registration System while encouraging fairness and a concentrated focus on those who pose a threat to the national security or safety of Americans.

Assign reasonable penalties, commensurate to the technical nature of the violations, for non-citizens' failure to register or provide timely notification of address changes.

Ensure that people who are charged with a crime based upon national security surveillance will see the evidence against them in the same manner as people charged with a crime based upon other kinds of classified information.

Require the government to submit a public report to Congress on data-mining activities in order to protect the privacy and due process rights of individuals and to ensure accurate information is collected and used.

The CLRA promotes the integrity of the American system of justice and reaffirms our commitment to core constitutional values. The CLRA moves the United States forward at this important time with a clear understanding that upholding basic rights and the rule of law is essential to our long-term success in countering terrorism and creating a safer and more stable world. We commend your leadership in introducing this critical piece of legislation and look forward to working with you in moving this measure to enactment.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

605 Citizenship Project

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

American Civil Liberties Union

Alliance For Justice

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA)

American Library Association

American Muslim Council

American Muslim Voice

American Voices Abroad (AVA)

Americans for Religious Liberty (ARL)

Amnesty International USA

Arab American Institute (AAI)

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Asian Law Caucus

Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America (APPNA)

Association of Research Libraries

Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC)

Center for American Progress

Center for Constitutional Rights

Center for Democracy & Technology

Center for National Security Studies

Code Pink Women for Peace

Consumer Action

Council on American-Islamic Relations

Freedom of Information Center

Freedom to Read Foundation (sister organization to the American Library Association)

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
Hmong National Development, Inc. (HND)
Homeland Democracy
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Immigrant Legal Resource Center
Indian American Center for Political Awareness
Interfaith Alliance
International Association of Educators for World Peace (U.S. Branch)
Japanese American Citizens League
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Korean American Coalition
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR)
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
The Multiracial Activist (TMA)
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC)
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (NCAPACD)
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Lawyers Guild
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
National Writers Union/UAW L.U. 1981
Open Society Institute
Pakistani American Public Affairs Committee (PAKPAC)
PeaceRoots Alliance
People For the American Way
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Privacy Activism
Rhetoricians for Peace
Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO, CLC
Sikh Coalition
Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force (SMART)
Society of American Law Teachers
South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT)
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUAC)
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
UNITED SIKHS
VotersUnite!

Local Organizations

Albuquerque Center for Peace and Justice, Albuquerque, New Mexico

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Los Angeles/Orange County Chapter, Anaheim, California
American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado, Denver, Colorado
American Civil Liberties Union -- Douglas County Chapter, Lawrence, Kansas
American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, Austin, Texas
Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, Dearborn, Michigan
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Big Sky Civil Liberties Committee, Montana
Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Bastrop County, Texas
Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Benton County, Corvallis, Oregon
Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Conway, Massachusetts
Blazing Ballerina Productions, Brooklyn, New York
Brazilian Immigrant Center, Allston, Massachusetts
Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War, North Brunswick, New Jersey
Coalition Against War and Injustice (CAWI), Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California
Concord (Massachusetts) Civil Liberties Committee, Concord, Massachusetts
Council of Pakistan Organizations (COPO), Brooklyn, New York
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Arizona Chapter (CAIR-AZ), Phoenix, Arizona
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Florida Chapter (CAIR-Florida), Davie, Florida
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Michigan Chapter (CAIR-Michigan), Southfield, Michigan
Council on American-Islamic Relations, New Jersey Chapter (CAIR-NJ), New Jersey
Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York Chapter (CAIR-NY), New York, New York
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Ohio Chapter (CAIR-OH), Columbus, Ohio
Council on American-Islamic Relations, San Antonio, Texas Chapter, San Antonio, Texas
Council on American-Islamic Relations, San Diego, California (CAIR-San Diego), San Diego, California
Council on American-Islamic Relations, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter (CAIR, SFBA), San Francisco, California
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Southern California Chapter (CAIR-LA), Anaheim, California
Dharma Megha, Okemos, Michigan
Durham Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Durham, North Carolina
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), Oakland, California
Estes Valley Multicultural Connections/Las Conexiones Multiculturales, Estes Park, Colorado
Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Miami, Florida
Guilderland Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Guilderland, New York
Hate Free Zone Washington, Seattle, Washington
Human Rights, Education and Law Project Inc. (HELP), Newark, New Jersey
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, Chicago, Illinois
Idaho Patriots, Boise, Idaho
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), Chicago, Illinois
Illinois Single Pagans, Aurora, Illinois
Immigrant Initiatives, CUNY School of Law, Flushing, New York
India Foundation Inc., East Lansing, Michigan
Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, San Francisco, California
International Service Society, Okemos, Michigan
Japanese American Services of the East Bay (JASEB), Berkeley, California
Korean American Resource & Cultural Center, Chicago, Illinois
Korean Resource Center, Los Angeles, California

Libertarian Party of San Joaquin County, California
Littletonians for Civil Liberties (LCL), Littleton, Massachusetts
The Lorax Society, Tulare, California
Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center, Chicago, Illinois
Na Loio - Immigrant Rights and Public Interest Legal Center, Honolulu, Hawaii
New York Immigration Coalition, New York, New York
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, Seattle, Washington
Northwest Workers' Justice Project, Cornelius, Oregon
Peace Action WI, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Port Orford Bill of Rights Defense Committee, Port Orford, Oregon
Rights for All People/Derechos Para Todos, Denver, Colorado
Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, Boulder, Colorado
Sakhi for South Asian Women, New York, New York
Save Our Rights Coalition of the Tri-Valley (SAVOR), Tri-Valley, California
Seva International, East Lansing, Michigan
South Asian Network (SAN), Artesia, California
Strength Through Peace, Fort Collins, Colorado
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC), Nashville, Tennessee
Texas Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, San Antonio, Texas
Thai Community Development Center, Hollywood, California
University Peace Initiative (UPI), Honolulu, Hawaii
Vaishnava Center for Enlightenment, Lansing, Michigan
Vedanta Society of East Lansing, East Lansing, Michigan
Washington Defender Association's Immigration Project, Seattle, Washington
Washington Watch Inc. Lansing, Michigan
Women For: Orange County, Irvine, California
Worldview, Ltd., Peterborough, New Hampshire
YKASEC - Empowering the Korean American Community, New York

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