



Obama Admin. Considers Refugee Status for Youths Now in Honduras

Unnamed White House officials told reporters on July 24 that the Obama administration is considering granting refugee status to minors and young adults now in Honduras. The plan, which is still under consideration, would involve screening the youths in Honduras to determine whether they qualify to enter the United States as refugees or on emergency humanitarian grounds.



The *New York Times* reported that the proposed plan, which was prepared by several federal agencies, would cost up to \$47 million over two years, based on 5,000 applicants, of which an estimated 1,750 people would be accepted. If the plan proved to be successful, it would be applied to Guatemala and El Salvador, as well.

The *Times* writer observed: “It is unclear how the administration determined those estimates, given that since Oct. 1 more than 16,500 unaccompanied children traveled to the United States from Honduras alone.”

The officials, who spoke to members of the press on the condition they not be identified by name, stressed that the plan has not been definitely decided on and is one of several ideas the White House and the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Justice, and Health and Human Services are considering. The officials briefed members of the Washington press corps in advance of President Obama’s July 25 meeting with President Otto Pérez Molina of Guatemala, President Juan Orlando Hernández of Honduras, and President Salvador Sánchez Cerén of El Salvador.

According to a July 18 White House press release, “The four leaders and Vice President Biden will discuss how to reinforce our ongoing collaboration to stem the flow of undocumented migrants from Central America to Mexico and the United States.”

The current federal policy for refugees, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), is outlined in the USCIS’s Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate (RAIO). The RAIO states:

- “In order to be granted either asylum or refugee status, U.S. law requires that an applicant satisfy the definition of refugee under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).”
- The INA defines a refugee as:
 - “any person who is outside any country of such person’s nationality ... who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of *race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.*” [Emphasis added.]
- “INA section 101(a)(42)(B) provides for in-country processing under special circumstances as



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specified by the president for:

“any person ... who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”

It is likely that the Obama administration plans to use the “special circumstances as specified by the president” clause as justification if it decides to proceed to implement the refugee plan for Honduras.

Mark Krikorian, the executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a think-tank in Washington, D.C., which promotes stricter immigration control and enforcement, told the media that the proposal would only increase the number of migrants from Central America trying to enter the United States.

“It’s clearly a bad idea,” Krikorian said. “Orders of magnitude more people will apply for refugee status if they can just do it from their home countries.”

Krikorian said the the proposal would allow people to claim to be refugees with “nothing more than a bus ride to the [U.S.] consulate [in their countries]. We’re talking about, down the road, an enormous additional flow of people from those countries.”

The practicality of the proposal was also questioned by Muzaffar Chishti, director of the nonprofit Migration Policy Institute’s office in New York. “What is a social group?” Chishti was quoted by the *Times* as asking, in reference to the INA’s use of the term to define people qualifying for refugee status. “This is going to create a huge deal of debate. You will see a lot of law developing on it.”

As was noted in an article posted by *The New American* on July 22, the UN has been pushing for the granting of refugee status to the migrants from Central America. The article quoted a report from WorldNetDaily that noted: “Representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, are ‘intensely discussing in meetings’ the possibility of extending U.N. protection to the thousands of Central Americans crossing the U.S. border with Mexico illegally by defining them as ‘refugees’ who are seeking asylum from political and domestic violence in their home nations.”

During a 10-nation meeting held in Nicaragua last week that was attended by ministers from the United States, Mexico, and several Central American countries, the officials concluded that the illegal aliens from Central America are “refugees” and deserve international protection, citing the UN’s declaration on the rights of refugees.

“They are leaving for some reason. Let’s not send them back in a mechanical way, but rather evaluate the reasons they left their country,” Fernando Protti, regional representative for the UN refugee agency, told the Associated Press.

NBC News observed that the designation would be unprecedented, reporting: “Central Americans would be among the first modern migrants considered refugees for fleeing violence and extortion at the hands of criminal gangs.”

During a recent interview with MSNBC’s Chuck Todd, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest explained that the Obama administration was getting impatient with the refusal by Congress to pass the Gang of Eight “immigration reform” legislation.

“We’re not just going to sit around and wait interminably for Congress,” Earnest explained. “We’ve been waiting a year already. The president has tasked his Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson with reviewing what options are available to the president, what is at his disposal using his executive authority to try to address some of the problems that have been created by our broken immigration



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system.”

The administration’s plan to grant refugee status to migrants who would not qualify under traditional definitions is the latest example of the administration doing an end run around Congress to accomplish its “immigration reform” goals.

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