



Statement

ENACT REAL COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM NOW

From: Jerome Teller, Chair of the Board and Gideon Aronoff, President and CEO

For 125 years HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, has worked to implement an agenda based on the Jewish tradition's core biblical-based values of welcoming the stranger and protecting the oppressed. In recent years, HIAS' active voice in support of efforts to resolve the complex problems associated with undocumented migration, a process known as Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR), has been central to our historic efforts to promote Jewish and American humanitarian values and security interests.

The problems that would be addressed by a workable CIR proposal include: the existence of 11 million individuals living in the United States without legal status; the dangerous reality of unauthorized border crossings that has resulted in thousands of deaths and increasingly violent conditions in the border regions; and the extensive backlogs in family immigration visas that cause prolonged and inhumane separation of families. Moreover, the existence of such a large shadow society severely hinders the United States' pressing security needs, which require the government to target enforcement resources on individuals who may pose grave dangers to the country.

HIAS believes that Comprehensive Immigration Reform must include ways to safeguard security, fulfill labor needs, and remain true to America's core humanitarian values. We strongly urge the 110th Congress to pass a truly comprehensive piece of legislation that contains the following provisions:

- Border protection policies that are consistent with American humanitarian values and effective against illegal migration, thereby allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry of terrorists and dangerous criminals.
- An opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens;
- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently must wait many years to be reunited with loved ones;
- The creation of legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected; and
- Programs to enhance citizenship and encourage the integration of newcomers into American society.

For more than 12 decades, HIAS has served the world's most vulnerable people – through wars, genocide, and other man-made horrors. It is our unique, 125-year perspective that gives us the conviction to say that America can - and must - continue to be a welcoming nation, while maintaining security for all its citizens. Now is the time for Congress to do the right thing: reject the appeals of immigration restrictionists in Congress and in the general public, and craft a national unity proposal on CIR to serve our country's national interests.