

**Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Hearing On “No Safe Haven: Accountability For Human Rights Violators
In The United States, Part II”
Subcommittee On Human Rights And The Law
October 6, 2009**

I am always looking for ways in which we can improve the investigation and prosecution of international human rights abusers, including those who seek safe haven in the United States. That is what led me to develop and fight for the Anti-Atrocity Alien Deportation Act for several years before it was finally enacted in 2004. That is what I did in supporting and implementing legislation for the Convention Against Torture, which resulted in the successful prosecution of a man known as Chuck Taylor. That is what I have done in my work on the State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee.

I worked to create the Human Rights and the Law Subcommittee last Congress, and to recreate it again this Congress, and have worked with Senator Durbin as he has ably chaired it.

It is vital that the United States reclaim its historic role as a world leader on issues of human rights. President Obama and Secretary Clinton are working hard to make that a reality.

This country should not provide a refuge for those who commit human rights violations. Congress took an important step when we passed the Anti-Atrocity Alien Deportation Act. That statute closed loopholes in our immigration law, making it easier to keep out perpetrators of human rights abuses, and to deport those who are already here. It established by statute the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) within the Department of Justice, an office that previously existed only under the discretionary authority of the Attorney General. The Anti-Atrocity Alien Deportation Act expanded OSI’s mission from denaturalizing Nazi war criminals, to investigating, extraditing, or denaturalizing any alien who participated in genocide, torture, or extrajudicial killing abroad. This law has prompted, among other accomplishments, the deportation of Kelbessa Negewo to Ethiopia, where he is now serving a life sentence for torture and multiple killings.

Senators Durbin and Coburn are now working to build on the foundation created by the Anti-Atrocity Alien Deportation Act. The Human Rights Enforcement Act of 2009, a bill I have cosponsored, seeks to improve our ability to identify and prosecute human rights abusers. It proposes consolidating two sections within the Department of Justice: the Office of Special Investigations, and the Domestic Security Section, which is charged with criminally prosecuting human rights abusers.

I look forward to hearing from Lanny Breuer, the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division, about what he thinks and recommends should be done. Our purpose is not to try not to micromanage the Justice Department. Rather, we all wish to vigorously protect human rights.

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