

Testimony of

The Honorable Orrin Hatch

February 12, 2002

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this important hearing on the plight of refugees and the refugee program.

I believe no country has as much interest or compassion as the United States when it comes to protecting innocents from persecution abroad. Under our immigration laws, those who demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of nationality on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion are rightly provided refuge. Each year, as a consequence of the refugee program, thousands of lives are saved and bettered through relocation into the United States where immigrants take refuge under the blanket of liberty and freedom that our Constitution provides. In short, generations are changed for the better, one life at a time. I am proud of that legacy and commend the President for his recent authorization of the admission of up to 70,000 refugees for fiscal year 2002. I also commend Commissioner Ziglar for his efforts to transform the INS into the agency it must be to protect those worthy of the same.

While I recognize the duty we have to protect innocents abroad, I am also keenly interested in protecting the general public within the United States and those dedicated Americans who risk their personal safety in some very dangerous parts of the world to facilitate the admission of refugees. In this regard, I believe the public is interested in (1) an explanation of the enhanced security checks added to the refugee program in light of the events of September 11, and (2) steps that are being taken to protect the INS and State Department personnel who are responsible for overseeing refugee processing overseas.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. I know that you and the distinguished Ranking Member, my good friend from Kansas, Senator Brownback, have an intense interest in the refugee program and I commend your collective leadership on the issue.

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