

Testimony of

The Honorable Orrin Hatch

April 18, 2002

I am pleased that we are considering S. 864, the Anti-Atrocity Alien Deportation Act of 2001, and I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for placing this important legislation on today's agenda. The Leahy/Hatch substitute amendment being presented today demonstrates our commitment to, first, prevent those who commit acts of torture or murder abroad from gaining entry into our country and, second, denaturalize and deport those who are already here.

Hundreds of thousands of victims of torture live in the United States today and I am proud that we provide them sanctuary. Yet it is estimated that we have more than a thousand torturers who also live in our country, some side-by-side with those whom they tortured. This cannot stand. As evidenced by our war on terrorism, we are not a nation that tolerates evil and cannot do so in this instance. Therefore, this bill is paramount. Among other things, it will render those who commit, order, incite, assist or otherwise participate in the commission of an act of torture inadmissible and deportable. It will also render foreign governmental officials who engage in particularly severe violations of religious freedom, at any time, inadmissible and deportable. Finally, this legislation provides that aliens who commit acts of torture or are responsible for particularly severe violations of religious freedom per se lack good moral character, which will effectively prevent them from becoming lawful permanent residents or citizens of the United States.

Under this critical legislation, torturers and murderers will no longer be able to seek or maintain refuge in our country. Those who seek admission through legal channels will be denied entry. Those who enter the country surreptitiously will be unable to obtain lawful immigration status once here. This is as it should be. We must send a message to these torturers and murderers who would seek to take advantage of our laws that their efforts will not succeed. To do that, we need this bill.

I recognize that there are those who suggest we could and should do more. I would simply note that this bill, as encompassing as it is, is only the first step of a longer journey to remove those who don't deserve to be here. I therefore offer my support to work with my colleagues in this committee, as well as the Administration, to enact further legislation ridding our country of others believed worthy of deportation.

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