

Graham Bill a Tragedy for Torture Survivors

ST. PAUL, Minn. & WASHINGTON — The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) today opposes S. 1494, the so-called “Secure and Protect Act” introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham.

“This misguided bill neither secures nor protects those most vulnerable and desperate for the safety of asylum: those who have escaped torture. [Our research shows](#) that nearly half of the refugees who have come to the United States are survivors of torture, and [other research](#) indicates a torture prevalence rate above 30 percent for asylum seekers,” said Andrea Cárcamo, CVT senior policy counsel. “Many refugees seeking safe haven at our southern border have also survived brutal torture. The U.S. must once again lead as humanitarians and address the refugee crisis with compassion, not further exacerbate the crisis of our asylum system with further cruelty.”

The bill, which essentially bars refugees from Central America from qualifying for asylum in the United States, also erodes other asylum-related protections by expanding indefinite immigration detention—including, appallingly, putting children at risk of permanent psychological and physical harm. CVT’s clinicians know all too well that “[even brief detention can cause psychological trauma and induce long-term mental health risks for children](#),” and the open-ended nature of [indefinite detention can cause severe, chronic emotional distress](#) in anyone subjected to it.

S. 1494 is scheduled for a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday, August 1.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit www.cvt.org.