



Press Release

Refuge Revoked: Ayuda Condemns Sessions' Decision to Upend Asylum Law

Washington, DC (June 12, 2018) – Ayuda today condemned the latest immigration decision issued by A.G. Jeff Sessions to upend asylum protections in the United States. In a precedential decision, A.G. Sessions substantially narrowed protections not only for individuals fleeing domestic violence but also for all those seeking refuge from persecution committed by non-government actors, long recognized as refugees under U.S. and international law. Ayuda is especially concerned because of the likely dramatic effect this decision will have on migrants from Central America, especially women and those seeking immediate protection at U.S. borders and points of entry.

By virtue of yesterday's decision, the attorney general reversed a 2014 decision by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), the nation's highest immigration court, which accepted that in some cases women are persecuted by their intimate partners because of their membership in a particular social group and therefore can seek refuge as asylees in the United States when their home country is unable or unwilling to protect them.

The attorney general's decision sets an extremely high bar for victims of crime, including domestic violence, to qualify for asylum protections, is inconsistent with federal and international law and deeply inhumane.

"Ayuda stands ready, together with our clients, to challenge this decision in every way and every case possible," said Paula Fitzgerald, Ayuda's executive director. "This decision is inconsistent with our shared values as a nation and threatens the strength of our communities, in addition to posing an immediate threat to the well-being of our immigrant neighbors and those entitled to protection under U.S. law."

Ayuda's attorneys and social services staff provide legal and supportive services to vulnerable immigrants, including those claiming asylum due to horrendous physical and emotional abuse. Ayuda's social workers and cases managers help victims find the support they need to overcome their tortured pasts and help them overcome their trauma and find safety.

"Immigrants turn to Ayuda in their greatest hour of need," said Fitzgerald. "In this uncertain time, you will find us where we must be: in trusted consultation with the immigrants whose lives are at stake, providing honest guidance, fearless representation, and holistic support. Our team of attorneys, social workers, language access program partners, and volunteers stand ready."

About Ayuda

Ayuda helps vulnerable low-income immigrants succeed and thrive in Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Since our founding in 1973, Ayuda has served more than 100,000 immigrants throughout the region. Ayuda is the only non-profit provider in the area that provides a wide range of immigration and family law assistance, social services, and language access support for all immigrants -- including women, men, and children -- from anywhere in the world. Our specialized services for immigrant children and for immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking are truly unique. This comprehensive and open approach breaks down barriers, helps those in need, and makes our communities stronger.