

# ECDC NEWS

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## **Detaining Asylum Seekers May Dim America's Welcoming Beacon, Refugee Leader Warns**

“Blanket detention of asylum seekers based solely on their nationality risks further erosion of America’s status as a beacon of refuge and hope for dispossessed people around the world,” Tsehaye Teferra, president of the Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc., said today, responding to the Department of Homeland Security’s plans to detain asylum seekers from at least 33 countries suspected of having links to the al Qaeda terrorist organization.

“Whatever prudent actions are needed to enhance the safety and security of America’s citizens will be understood and accepted,” he said, “but they should be taken with great care to preserve the nation’s humanitarian traditions.”

Arbitrary and indefinite detention of asylum claimants without regard to the legitimacy of their individual cases violates those traditions, he said, creating the type of “guilt by nationality” bigotry that tarnished the nation’s image by its treatment of foreign-born refugees and immigrants during the early stages of the World War II.

“Those fleeing violence and terror in their homelands should not be penalized anew by America’s war on terrorism,” Teferra said. “Detaining those who pose no threat to America and who have no link to terrorist groups here or abroad violates the due process guarantees that have always distinguished democracy from despotism.”

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