



International Refugee
Assistance Project

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AFTER LAWSUIT WIN, FIRST IRANIAN REFUGEES TRAVEL FROM AUSTRIA TO THE U.S.

(San Jose, CA) – Last Thursday, a group of about a dozen refugees from Iran arrived in the United States and reunited with friends and family as part of the Lautenberg-Specter program. All individuals' cases had previously been denied for resettlement in the United States, along with dozens of others. In response, the [International Refugee Assistance Project](#) (IRAP) and [Latham & Watkins LLP](#) had filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Iranians, which resulted in a court order that led to the reopening of their cases.

Doe v. Nielsen challenges the mass denials of the Iranian refugees, who had abandoned their homes in Iran and traveled to Vienna at the invitation of the U.S. government to complete processing of their refugee applications under the Lautenberg Amendment. Plaintiffs in the class include Iranian individuals and the U.S. family members who sponsored their applications.

The newly arrived refugees are Iranian religious minorities who had been left stranded in Vienna, Austria, and lived in fear of being deported back to Iran, where they faced persecution and discrimination. In February of 2018, after waiting for over a year for their cases to be processed, they suddenly received denials from the U.S. government "as a matter of discretion," even though the program used to have an almost 100% acceptance rate.

The government had reopened the Iranians' cases following a district court decision in July of 2018 in *Doe v. Nielsen*, which ordered the government to disclose individualized reasons for the mass denials to allow plaintiffs to meaningfully request government review of these denials.



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Kate Meyer, Litigation Staff Attorney at IRAP, said: “We are relieved that several of our clients have safely arrived in the U.S. to reunite with family. We are hopeful that the remaining class members will have that same opportunity and no longer have to live in fear of being deported back to Iran.”

“This is an outstanding victory for our clients, as well as for the rule of law,” said **Belinda Lee, partner at Latham & Watkins**. “The Lautenberg-Specter program is a congressionally enacted program that facilitates refugee admission of certain vulnerable groups. We are thrilled that we could help several of our clients reunite with their families.”

Not all refugee applicants who are part of the case have traveled yet. IRAP and Latham & Watkins continue to fight the case on behalf of those who have not yet reunited with their families in the United States.

To view the press release, click [here](#).

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