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**The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA): Impact on Asylum Seekers**

Historically the United States has been seen as a place to seek refuge from religious and political persecution (Pistone, 1998). Since the U.S. was founded, people from all over the world have come seeking safety and survival away from the corruption, war, torture and persecution they experienced in their home countries (Pistone, 1998).

Yet, since the passing of the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, immigrants have been criminalized (Friman, 2006; Hernandez, 2005; Lee, 2005; Physicians for Human Rights, 2003; Preston & Perez, 2006; Welch, 2003a), and immigration policy has been placed under the auspices of national security (Hing, 2006; Phillips, Rodriguez & Hagan, 2002).

The IIRIRA passed as a way to reform what was seen as a broken immigration system. While the Act focused on all types of immigrants, it included specific revisions in asylum law. These include: a one year deadline for affirmative asylum seekers to apply for asylum, denial of work authorization until asylum is granted, mandatory and indefinite detention until asylum is granted, and expedited removal from the U.S. (Cianciarulo, 2006; Grant, 2006; Hernandez, 2005; Pistone, 1998; Pistone & Hoeffner, 2006; Welch 2003).

This paper is divided into two different sections. The first section provides historical context for recent immigration policies affecting the asylum process, focusing on the asylum reforms that took place in 1996 with the passing of the IIRIRA. The second section critically analyzes the asylum law revisions set forth by IIRIRA and showcases the consequences to asylum seekers in order to demonstrate how they have been and continue to be criminalized by the revisions (Grant, 2006).

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