



ASYLUM SEEKER ADVOCACY PROJECT

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ASAP, Advocates Challenge Weaponization of U.S. Immigration Court System *File Lawsuit "Las Americas v. Trump"*

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP), Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Innovation Law Lab (Law Lab), Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, and Santa Fe Dreamers Project (SFDP) filed a federal lawsuit challenging the weaponization of the nation's immigration court system.

"The government has done everything possible to put up obstacles for those fleeing persecution to seek asylum in the United States," said **Conchita Cruz, ASAP's Co-Executive Director**. "The U.S. violates the rights of asylum seekers at the Mexico-U.S. border. But it does not stop there. The government then creates insurmountable obstacles for asylum seekers to seek protection within the U.S. immigration court system."

The complaint outlines pervasive dysfunction and bias within the immigration court system, including:

- Areas that have become known as "asylum-free zones," where virtually no asylum claims have been granted for the past several years.
- The nationwide backlog of pending immigration cases, which has now surpassed 1 million — meaning that thousands of asylum seekers must wait three or four years for an initial court date.
- The Enforcement Metrics Policy, implemented last year, which gives judges a personal financial stake in every case they decide and pushes them to deny more cases more quickly.

- The “family unit” court docket, which stigmatizes the cases of recently arrived families and rushes their court dates, often giving families inadequate time to find an attorney and prepare for their hearings.

“We must demand better from our government,” said **Zachary Manfredi, ASAP Staff Attorney**. “There is a crisis occurring at immigration courts throughout the country, as asylum seekers are systematically denied a meaningful opportunity to present their cases. As advocates, we are merely asking that the courts step in to ensure that the government respects the rights of our clients under the law.”

“Under the leadership of President Trump and the attorney general, the immigration court system has become fixated on the goal of producing deportations, not adjudications,” said **Stephen Manning, Executive Director of Innovation Law Lab**. “The system is riddled with policies that undermine the work of legal service providers and set asylum seekers up to lose without a fair hearing of their case.”

“As the political rhetoric surrounding immigrants has become sharper, we’ve noticed a decline in the treatment our clients receive in immigration court,” said **Linda Corchado, Director of Legal Services, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center**. “While asylum seekers are entitled to a full and fair hearing, their proceedings are too often rushed, and judges deny our requests for time to properly prepare their cases and collect and translate crucial evidence from across the world.”

The complaint can be viewed here:

<http://innovationlawlab.org/faircourts>

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