

Trump Administration backs down, allows Iranian Christian refugees to settle in USA



Almost a dozen persecuted Iranians who were stranded in Austria for two and a half years were finally allowed to travel to the United States in mid-February after being granted asylum earlier this year.

They were part of a group of 87 Christian and other religious minority refugees who were denied asylum in the United States under the Lautenberg humanitarian programme for religious minorities. The programme had previously operated with an almost 100% success rate for 30 years.

The 87 refugees applied for asylum in February 2018 but were rejected during a clampdown on refugees by President Trump's Administration.

Some of the refugees then filed a class-action lawsuit in California. The judge ruled that the government must disclose individual reasons for the denials, allowing the applicants to file an appeal. This led to the cases being reopened.

?Many in Vienna are still waiting for a resolution on their cases. They are still separated from their families and scared they will face persecution if they go back to Iran,? said Kate Meyer, a lawyer with the International Refugee Assistance Project.

The Lautenberg programme was established in 1990 by US Senator Frank Lautenberg. In 2003, Congress voted to expand the Lautenberg Amendment to establish a legal presumption of eligibility for refugee status for Iranian religious minorities. Since then, about 30,000 Iranians have been resettled in the US under the programme.

Source: Barnabas Fund