



HSG SECURES PRO BONO WIN FOR IRAQI REFUGEE

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Holwell Shuster & Goldberg LLP, in partnership with the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), recently secured a pro bono victory on behalf of an Iraqi refugee and her children who, after seven years, were able to return to the U.S. In 2016, the client and her then two children were admitted to the U.S. as refugees from Iraq. Her husband, who was denied refugee status and remained in Iraq, subsequently received a death threat from an Iraqi militia group. As a result, she returned to Iraq to be with her husband without applying for and receiving Refugee Travel Documents (RTDs), required under current U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations for refugees to return to the U.S. after foreign travel. HSG was retained in 2017 and timely filed for the RTDs. Shortly after, the client had a third child.

Despite repeated requests and administrative applications, USCIS did not decide the RTD applications for five years. As a result, HSG filed a mandamus action in August 2022 to compel USCIS to adjudicate and issue a decision on the RTD applications. That litigation prompted USCIS to act, granting RTDs to the two older children, but denying their mother's application. In April 2023, HSG filed a motion asking USCIS to reopen and reconsider its denial. Once again, USCIS failed to respond. With the expiration of the two older children's RTDs approaching, in March 2024, IRAP and HSG filed a second litigation, lodging a statutory challenge to the USCIS regulations that require refugees to obtain RTDs and seeking a preliminary injunction, which the court granted in May 2024. As a result, HSG liaised with the government to have RTDs issued to the firm's client and re-issued to her two older children, and to obtain humanitarian parole for her youngest child. Last month, the family successfully traveled from Iraq to the U.S.

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