

ACLU sues to stop Trump policy on jailing asylum seekers

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The American Civil Liberties Union, American Immigration Council and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project filed a class-action lawsuit over the policy in U.S. District Court in Seattle on Thursday.

Seattle: The American Civil Liberties Union and other groups are again going to court to challenge the Trump administration, this time over its policy to bar detained asylum seekers from asking a judge to grant them bond.

The American Civil Liberties Union, American Immigration Council and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project filed a class-action lawsuit over the policy in U.S. District Court in Seattle on Thursday.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr announced in mid-April that asylum seekers who have shown they have a credible fear of returning to their country and are facing removal donâ€™t have the right to be released on bond by an immigration court judge while their cases are pending.

Usually, an asylum seeker who crosses between ports of entry would have the right to ask a judge to grant them bond for release. Under the new ruling, they will have to wait in detention until their case is adjudicated.

Michael Tan, senior staff attorney with ACLUâ€™s Immigrantsâ€™ Rights Project, said the policy unconstitutionally strips people of their right to a hearing. â€œAt the end of the day, the government doesnâ€™t get to lock people up without due process,â€• Tan said. â€œAnd the most basic part of due process is a hearing to determine whether a person should be locked up or not.â€•

Barrâ€™s ruling is scheduled to take effect in mid-July and comes amid a frustrating time for the administration as the number of border crossers has climbed sharply. Most are families from Central America who are fleeing violence and poverty. Many seek asylum.

Trina Realmuto, directing attorney with the American Immigration Council, called the ruling part of the administrationâ€™s crusade to deter and prevent asylum seekers from requesting protection in the United States. â€œWe will continue fighting the administrationâ€™s use of mass incarceration as a weapon to punish migrants,â€• Realmuto said in a statement.

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The number of decisions by immigration judges that President Donald Trumpâ€™s administration has referred to itself for review is unprecedented, according to Sarah Pierce, policy analyst with the Migration Policy Institute. The administration under both Barr and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions has reviewed a total of 10 immigration rulings. Thatâ€™s compared to four under President Barack Obamaâ€™s tenure and nine during George W. Bushâ€™s.

- AP