

The nation's highest ranking Ancient Order of Hibernians leaders have appealed to President Bush to intervene in the case of Malachy McAllister and his family.

The men's and ladies AOH national presidents have sent a letter to Bush on behalf of Belfast native McAllister, who, along with two of his four children, faces potential deportation to Ireland at any time.

In a separate statement, Massachusetts-based Jack Meehan and Dorothy Weldon acknowledged with gratitude legal and legislative initiatives of among others, New Jersey Representative Steve Rothman and Senator Charles Schumer, who has written to the Department of Homeland Security on behalf of the McAllisters.

"But let's face it. Now is the time for those who believe in the promise of America to act. The President alone or acting in concert with Congress can demonstrate what the Irish peace accord is supposed to mean - deliver justice to Malachy and end his family's nightmare," AOH National President Jack Meehan said in the statement.

"The Attorney General and Homeland Security have spent millions to legally lynch this lone Irishman in a pointless exercise that could not possibly contribute one iota to national security," Meehan said. Meehan's plea was echoed in the statement by AOH ladies president, Pennsylvania-based Dorothy Weldon

"We appeal to President Bush, whose concern for government excess is well known, and to his sense of what America must mean to those who have fled Afghanistan, Iraq and Burma. Malachy is just as entitled to asylum or relief from deportation as those who fled those conflicts and government persecution.

"Indeed, he has spent the last twenty years proving how worthy he is of a home in America," said Weldon.

The two Hibernian leaders, in their letter to the president, describe a case in which McAllister is a "victim of a government bureaucracy that has run amok and lawyers too blind to do their duty to seek truth and justice."

The letter states: "We plea for your help in granting Mr. McAllister permanent residency status for three reasons.

"First, as a man who had served a prison sentence in Northern Ireland, Malachy was marked for death by loyalist vigilantes. He survived one attempt on his life and escaped garrison rule in Northern Ireland by fleeing with his family to Canada in 1988 and eventually to America.

"He has lived, worked, and led an exemplary life here ever since. A fundamental part of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, which we both have wholeheartedly supported, is reconciliation, release of prisoners, and justice.

"These concepts seem to have escaped the notice of the Department of Homeland Security which, on its own initiative, and not acting upon any government request, has relentlessly pursued deportation of Malachy nearly ten years after the accord was signed! This legal vendetta is wholly unwarranted. Malachy is no threat to this nation as a Federal Appeals Court has indicated. Cases such as this may keep an army of lawyers employed at government expense, but at the same time erode respect for the rule of law.

"Second, as the latest report of the Northern Ireland Independent Monitoring Commission indicates, the loyalist paramilitaries have not disarmed and are a real threat to individuals and to the peace process. Malachy's potential deportation to the North of Ireland has already prompted these same thugs to issue death threats to him and his family. The priority attention given to this deportation proceeding by the Attorney General and the Department of Homeland Security suggests a determination to add yet another victim to the tragic conflict in Ireland.

"Third, we share your concern for the reform of immigration law. Our support, and I believe yours, is derived in no small measure from an awareness of the hopes and dreams of the many who come to this country seeking a way of life free of poverty and despair, who wish to build a new life and to breathe the air of freedom and democracy enriched by the rule of law and justice.

"Malachy McAllister is the poster boy for the many in this country whose young lives knew nothing but persecution and who saw in America a place where one could live free of such fears. When President Reagan told the "freedom man" story of the Vietnamese boat people, he could have been talking about Malachy McAllister's life."

Meehan and Weldon conclude their letter by asking President Bush for his "early consideration of and action upon" their appeal on behalf of the McAllister family and "their legions of supporters here in their adopted country."

