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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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Washington, DC 20529



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

DW

[Redacted]

FILE: [Redacted]
EAC 03 203 52693

Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER

Date: SEP 1 2003

IN RE: Petitioner: [Redacted]
Beneficiary: [Redacted]

PETITION: Petition for Alien Fiancé(e) Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

[Redacted]

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Robert P. Wiemann, Director
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The nonimmigrant visa petition was denied by the Director, Vermont Service Center, and is now on appeal before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO). The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a naturalized citizen of the United States who seeks to classify the beneficiary, a native of the Philippines and resident of Bahrain, as the fiancé of a United States citizen pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K).

The director denied the petition after determining that the petitioner had not offered documentation evidencing that she and the beneficiary had personally met within two years before the date of filing the petition, as required by section 214(d) of the Act. *Decision of the Director*, dated December 15, 2003.

Section 101(a)(15)(K) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(K), provides nonimmigrant classification to an alien who:

- (i) is the fiancé(e) of a U.S. citizen and who seeks to enter the United States solely to conclude a valid marriage with that citizen within 90 days after admission;
- (ii) has concluded a valid marriage with a citizen of the United States who is the petitioner, is the beneficiary of a petition to accord a status under section 201(b)(2)(A)(i) that was filed under section 204 by the petitioner, and seeks to enter the United States to await the approval of such petition and the availability to the alien of an immigrant visa; or
- (iii) is the minor child of an alien described in clause (i) or (ii) and is accompanying, or following to join, the alien.

Section 214(d) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(d), states, in pertinent part, that a fiancé(e) petition:

. . . shall be approved only after satisfactory evidence is submitted by the petitioner to establish that the parties have previously met in person within two years before the date of filing the petition, have a bona fide intention to marry, and are legally able and actually willing to conclude a valid marriage in the United States within a period of ninety days after the alien's arrival. . . .

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2), the petitioner may be exempted from this requirement for a meeting if it is established that compliance would:

- (1) result in extreme hardship to the petitioner; or
- (2) that compliance would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice, as where marriages are traditionally arranged by the parents of the contracting parties and the prospective bride and groom are prohibited from meeting subsequent to the arrangement and prior to the wedding day. In addition to establishing that the required meeting would be a violation of custom or practice, the petitioner must also establish that any and all other aspects of the traditional arrangements have been or will be met in accordance with the custom or practice.

The regulation at section 214.2 does not define what may constitute extreme hardship to the petitioner. Therefore, each claim of extreme hardship must be judged on a case-by-case basis taking into account the totality of the petitioner's circumstances. Generally, a director looks at whether the petitioner can demonstrate the existence of circumstances that are (1) not within the power of the petitioner to control or change, and (2) likely to last for a considerable duration or the duration cannot be determined with any degree of certainty.

The petitioner filed the Petition for Alien Fiancé(e) (Form I-129F) with the Immigration and Naturalization Service [now Citizenship and Immigration Services] on July 3, 2003. Therefore, the petitioner and the beneficiary were required to have met during the period that began on July 3, 2001 and ended on July 3, 2003.

The director determined that the petitioner's request for a waiver of the meeting requirement based on hardship to the petitioner could not be granted because the petitioner can meet the beneficiary in a third country or the beneficiary could travel to the United States to meet the petitioner.

On appeal, counsel contends that the petitioner cannot travel to the Philippines owing to the SARS epidemic. Counsel further asserts that the beneficiary does not want the petitioner to travel to Saudi Arabia, where he currently works, owing to the threat of terrorism in the Middle East. Counsel indicates that the petitioner is unable to take time away from her job to travel because she will lose her employment and be unable to support her parents. Counsel states that this situation imposes extreme hardship on the petitioner. *Appeal Brief in Support of the I-129F Petition*, undated.

The AAO notes that while the petitioner and the beneficiary are required to meet under section 214(d) of the Act, the statute does not require the petitioner to travel to the beneficiary's home country. The petitioner indicates that the beneficiary has been denied a visa to visit the United States, however, the record fails to evidence the beneficiary's attempts to obtain a visa. *Letter from Oliva D. Kurz*, dated January 2, 2004. The record does not demonstrate that the petitioner and the beneficiary have explored additional options for a meeting, including, but not limited to the beneficiary traveling to meet the petitioner in a bordering country. Further, the record fails to establish that the SARS epidemic continues to constitute a barrier to the petitioner traveling to the Philippines, the beneficiary's home country.

The AAO further notes that the time commitment and expenses associated with travel to a foreign country in order to fulfill the meeting requirement are a common requirement to those filing the Form I-129F petition and do not constitute extreme hardship to the petitioner.

Taking into account the totality of the circumstances as the petitioner has presented them, the AAO does not find that compliance with the meeting requirement would result in extreme hardship to the petitioner or would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice. Therefore, the appeal will be dismissed.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(k)(2), the denial of the petition is without prejudice. The petitioner may file a new Form I-129F petition on the beneficiary's behalf when sufficient evidence is available.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. *See* Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.