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**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

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FILE:

Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER

Date:

AUG 16 2005

IN RE:

Petitioner:

Beneficiary:

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

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

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, California Service Center, and is now on appeal before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO). The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a citizen of the United States who seeks to classify the beneficiary, a native and citizen of Cote D'Ivoire, as the fiancé of a United States citizen pursuant to § 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 § 214(d) of the Act. Further, the director found that the petitioner failed to establish that meeting as required would violate strict and long-established customs of the beneficiary's foreign culture or social practice.

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 § 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 Citizenship and Immigration Services on September 13, 2004. Therefore, the petitioner and the beneficiary were required to have met during the period that began on September 13, 2002 and ended on September 13, 2004.

In response to the director's request for evidence and additional information concerning the parties' last meeting, the petitioner submitted a letter the pastor of the beneficiary's church, who indicated that the beneficiary's religion prohibited sexual intercourse before marriage. The petitioner did not submit any evidence that either her or the beneficiary's religion prohibited the couple from physically meeting.

On appeal, the petitioner submits another letter from the beneficiary's pastor, a letter from the pastor of the petitioner's church, and a U.S. State Department travel warning and consular information sheet regarding [REDACTED]. Both pastors write that meeting face-to-face would violate the parties' religious beliefs due to the risk that their strong physical attraction could result in inappropriately intimate behavior. The pastors do not address the possibility that the petitioner and beneficiary could meet in the presence of chaperones, which would greatly reduce the probability of their engaging in intimate relations.

The State Department information recommends that U.S. citizens avoid travel to [REDACTED] due to civil unrest. The AAO notes, however, that the Act only requires that the petitioner and beneficiary meet; it does not specify that the meeting must take place in the beneficiary's country. The record contains no evidence that the petitioner and beneficiary would be unable to meet in a country other than [REDACTED].

The evidence of record does not establish that the petitioner and the beneficiary met as required. 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 § 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.