



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

**Non-Precedent Decision of the
Administrative Appeals Office**

MATTER OF U-E-M-

DATE: NOV. 9, 2015

APPEAL OF VERMONT SERVICE CENTER DECISION

PETITION: FORM I-918, PETITION FOR U NONIMMIGRANT STATUS

The Petitioner seeks nonimmigrant classification as a victim of certain qualifying criminal activity. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act) § 101(a)(15)(U), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(U). The Director, Vermont Service Center, denied the petition. The Petitioner filed a motion to reopen and a motion to reconsider, which the Director subsequently denied. The matter is now before us on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

I. APPLICABLE LAW

Section 101(a)(15)(U) of the Act provides, in pertinent part, for U nonimmigrant classification to:

(i) subject to section 214(p), an alien who files a petition for status under this subparagraph, if the Secretary of Homeland Security determines that --

- (I) the alien has suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of having been a victim of criminal activity described in clause (iii);
- (II) the alien . . . possesses information concerning criminal activity described in clause (iii);
- (III) the alien . . . has been helpful, is being helpful, or is likely to be helpful to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement official, to a Federal, State, or local prosecutor, to a Federal or State judge, to the Service, or to other Federal, State, or local authorities investigating or prosecuting criminal activity described in clause (iii); and
- (IV) the criminal activity described in clause (iii) violated the laws of the United States or occurred in the United States (including in Indian country and military installations) or the territories and possessions of the United States;

Blackmail and extortion are listed as qualifying criminal activity in clause (iii) of section 101(a)(15)(U) of the Act, which also provides that a qualifying criminal activity involves the

specifically listed crimes “or any similar activity in violation of Federal, State, or local criminal law. . . .”

The eligibility requirements for U nonimmigrant classification are further explicated in the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.14, which states, in pertinent part:

(a) *Definitions.* As used in this section, the term:

...

(9) Qualifying crime or qualifying criminal activity includes one or more of the following or any similar activities in violation of Federal, State or local criminal law of the United States: Rape; torture; trafficking; incest; domestic violence; sexual assault; abusive sexual contact; prostitution; sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation; being held hostage; peonage; involuntary servitude; slave trade; kidnapping; abduction; unlawful criminal restraint; false imprisonment; blackmail; extortion; manslaughter; murder; felonious assault; witness tampering; obstruction of justice; perjury; or attempt, conspiracy, or solicitation to commit any of the above mentioned crimes. The term “any similar activity” refers to criminal offenses in which the nature and elements of the offenses are substantially similar to the statutorily enumerated list of criminal activities.

...

(b) *Eligibility.* An alien is eligible for U-1 nonimmigrant status if he or she demonstrates all of the following . . . :

(1) The alien has suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of having been a victim of qualifying criminal activity. Whether abuse is substantial is based on a number of factors, including but not limited to: The nature of the injury inflicted or suffered; the severity of the perpetrator’s conduct; the severity of the harm suffered; the duration of the infliction of the harm; and the extent to which there is permanent or serious harm to the appearance, health, or physical or mental soundness of the victim, including aggravation of pre-existing conditions. No single factor is a prerequisite to establish that the abuse suffered was substantial. Also, the existence of one or more of the factors automatically does not create a presumption that the abuse suffered was substantial. A series of acts taken together may be considered to constitute substantial physical or mental abuse even where no single act alone rises to that level . . . ;

Section 214(p) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(p), further prescribes, in pertinent part:

(1) Petitioning Procedures for Section 101(a)(15)(U) Visas

The petition filed by an alien under section 101(a)(15)(U)(i) shall contain a certification from a Federal, State, or local law enforcement official, prosecutor, judge, or other Federal, State, or local authority investigating criminal activity described in section 101(a)(15)(U)(iii). This certification may also be provided by an official of the Service whose ability to provide such certification is not limited to information concerning immigration violations. This certification shall state that the alien “has been helpful, is being helpful, or is likely to be helpful” in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity described in section 101(a)(15)(U)(iii).

...

(4) Credible Evidence Considered

In acting on any petition filed under this subsection, the consular officer or the [Secretary of Homeland Security], as appropriate, shall consider any credible evidence relevant to the petition.

In addition, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.14(c)(4), prescribes the evidentiary standards and burden of proof in these proceedings:

The burden shall be on the petitioner to demonstrate eligibility for U-1 nonimmigrant status. The petitioner may submit any credible evidence relating to his or her Form I-918 for consideration by [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)]. USCIS shall conduct a de novo review of all evidence submitted in connection with Form I-918 and may investigate any aspect of the petition. Evidence previously submitted for this or other immigration benefit or relief may be used by USCIS in evaluating the eligibility of a petitioner for U-1 nonimmigrant status. However, USCIS will not be bound by its previous factual determinations. USCIS will determine, in its sole discretion, the evidentiary value of previously or concurrently submitted evidence, including Form I-918, Supplement B, “U Nonimmigrant Status Certification.”

II. RELEVANT FACTS AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Petitioner is a citizen of Mexico who entered the United States in February 2006 without inspection, admission, or parole. The Petitioner filed the instant Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status with an accompanying Form I-918 Supplement B, U Nonimmigrant Status Certification on September 16, 2013. On October 23, 2013, the Director issued a request for evidence (RFE) requesting evidence that the crime listed on the Form I-918 Supplement B was a qualifying criminal activity. The Petitioner responded with additional evidence, which the Director found insufficient to establish the Petitioner’s eligibility and denied the Form I-918 on these grounds. The Petitioner timely filed a motion to reopen and reconsider the decision. The Director granted the motion to reopen and reconsider, but found that the new evidence and arguments submitted were insufficient to change the previous decision. The decision remained denied and the Petitioner appealed the denial of the Form I-918. On appeal, the Petitioner claims that he suffered

Matter of U-E-M-

substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of being a victim of a qualifying criminal activity under the regulation.

III. ANALYSIS

We conduct appellate review on a *de novo* basis. Based on the evidence in the record, we withdraw that part of the Director's decision concerning qualifying criminal activity, but dismiss the appeal as the evidence in the record does not demonstrate that the Petitioner suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of the qualifying criminal activity.

A. Qualifying Criminal Activity

The Petitioner submitted a Form I-918 Supplement B signed by [REDACTED] with the [REDACTED] Oregon District Attorney's Office (certifying official), on March 15, 2013. The certifying official listed the criminal activity of which the Petitioner was a victim at Part 3.1 as blackmail, extortion, and attempt to commit one of those offenses. In Part 3.3, the certifying official referred to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) §§ 164.055 (theft in the first degree), 164.057 (aggravated theft in the first degree), and 164.075 (theft by extortion) as the criminal activity that was investigated or prosecuted. At Part 3.5, which asks the certifying official to briefly describe the criminal activity being investigated or prosecuted, she indicated that the Petitioner was the victim of someone "falsely represent[ing] himself as an Immigration Attorney . . . [who] as a result extorted approximately \$6530.00 . . ." The certifying official further noted that "threats to notify law enforcement and have the [Petitioner] deported kept [him] from reporting the incident" and that approximately sixty other individuals were similarly preyed upon by these false representatives.

Although all three of the certified statutes concern the crime of theft under Oregon law, ORS § 164.075 specifically criminalizes theft by extortion and provides:

(1) A person commits theft by extortion when the person compels or induces another to deliver property to the person or to a third person by instilling in the other a fear that, if the property is not so delivered, the actor or a third person will in the future:

- (a) Cause physical injury to some person;
- (b) Cause damage to property;
- (c) Engage in other conduct constituting a crime;
- (d) Accuse some person of a crime or cause criminal charges to be instituted against the person;
- (e) Expose a secret or publicize an asserted fact, whether true or false, tending to subject some person to hatred, contempt or ridicule;

(b)(6)

Matter of U-E-M-

...

(i) Inflict any other harm that would not benefit the actor.

Extortion is defined under federal law as: “the obtaining of property from another, with . . . consent, induced by wrongful use of actual or threatened force, violence, or fear, or under color of official right.” 18 U.S.C. § 1951(b)(2). The Director found that the Petitioner was not a victim of qualifying criminal activity, because the crime he was a victim of was economic in nature. The Act does not specify what general types of crimes may be considered qualifying, but instead provides a specific list, such as extortion, blackmail, and embezzlement, which often involve economic loss, as qualifying crimes. Moreover, extortion is not solely pecuniary in nature as it involves threats of force and/or inducement through fear. The Petitioner demonstrated that he was the victim of extortion, which is a qualifying criminal activity under section 101(a)(15)(U)(iii) of the Act. As a result, we withdraw the portion of the Director’s decision that finds otherwise.

B. Substantial Physical or Mental Abuse

At Part 3.6 of the Form I-918 Supplement B, which asks for a description of any known or documented injury to the Petitioner, the certifying official left the space blank. In his September 11, 2013 affidavit, the Petitioner stated that he paid P-S- and J-V-¹ a total of \$6,100 for legal assistance with immigration papers for himself and his wife. The men initially promised that the Petitioner would receive his green card in six months, but after that time had elapsed, they gave the Petitioner various excuses for the delay and why he would have to give them additional money. The Petitioner said that every time he hesitated to pay additional money, P-S- and J-V- would tell him that immigration authorities already had his address and would come to deport him without their protection. The Petitioner stated that he had to reduce the amount of money he sent to his parents in Mexico because of his payments to J-V- and P-S- and that he sold his car to make the payments. The Petitioner stated that he and J-V- attend the same church and J-V- made a promise to one of the church leaders on her deathbed that he was helping people with their immigration status. The Petitioner states that, because of this betrayal, he began doubting his faith and stopped going to church for six months because he believed that his fellow parishioners might take advantage of him. He stated that he has returned to church, although those feelings linger. He also stated that he fears that he will be stopped and deported because he submitted his contact information to immigration authorities.

The Petitioner also submitted a letter from Pastor [REDACTED] dated September 7, 2013. Pastor [REDACTED] stated that the Petitioner’s dreams were shattered when he learned he had been the victim of fraud. Pastor [REDACTED] stated that the Petitioner suffered extreme depression as well as “embarrassment, humility, and losing the dignity of a hard working man” as a result of the fraud.

¹ Names redacted to protect the individuals’ privacy.

Although the Petitioner described the facts of the crime, he did not include a description of how the criminal activity has impacted his daily life, his interactions with others and his overall health and well-being. The Petitioner related that he had a fear of deportation previously that was exacerbated by the fraud committed; however, the Petitioner has not explained in sufficient detail how the fraud impacted this fear or his overall mental state. Consequently, as the record is presently constituted, the Petitioner has not satisfied subsection 101(a)(15)(U)(i)(I) of the Act, which requires him to demonstrate that he suffered substantial abuse resulting from qualifying criminal activity.

IV. CONCLUSION

In visa petition proceedings, it is the Petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361; *Matter of Otiende*, 26 I&N Dec. 127, 128 (BIA 2013). Here that burden has not been met. The portion of the Director's decision finding that the Petitioner was not a victim of qualifying criminal activity is withdrawn; however, the record does not establish that the Petitioner suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of the qualifying criminal activity.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.

Cite as *Matter of U-E-M-*, ID# 14912 (AAO Nov. 9, 2015)