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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of Administrative Appeals MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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FILE: [REDACTED] Office: SAN BERNARDINO, CA

Date: SEP 13 2010

IN RE: Applicant: [REDACTED]

APPLICATION: Application for Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(i)

ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT:

[REDACTED]

INSTRUCTIONS:

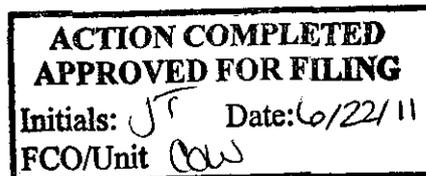
This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. Please refer to 8 C.F.R. § 103.5 for the specific requirements. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$585. Any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen, as required by 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i).

Thank you,

Argum Sikka
for

Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office



DISCUSSION: The waiver application was denied by the Field Office Director, San Bernardino, California. The matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The record reflects that the applicant is a native and citizen of Mexico who was found to be inadmissible to the United States pursuant to section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(C)(i), for willful misrepresentation of a material fact in order to procure an immigration benefit. The applicant is married to a U.S. citizen and seeks a waiver of inadmissibility pursuant to section 212(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(i), in order to reside with her husband and children in the United States.

The field office director found that the applicant failed to establish extreme hardship to a qualifying relative and denied the waiver application accordingly. *Decision of the Field Office Director*, dated March 6, 2008.

The record contains, *inter alia*: a copy of the marriage certificate of the applicant and her husband, indicating they were married on September 14, 2006; two letters from copies of the birth certificates of the applicant's two U.S. citizen daughters; a copy of the applicant's first husband's death certificate; numerous letters of support; a psychological evaluation of copies of tax and financial documents; photographs of the applicant and her family; and an approved Petition for Alien relative (Form I-130). The entire record was reviewed and considered in rendering this decision on the appeal.

Section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act provides, in pertinent part:

In general.—Any alien who, by fraud or willfully misrepresenting a material fact, seeks to procure (or has sought to procure or has procured) a visa, other documentation, or admission into the United States or other benefit provided under this Act is inadmissible.

Section 212(i) provides, in pertinent part:

(1) The Attorney General [now Secretary of Homeland Security] may, in the discretion of the Attorney General [now Secretary of Homeland Security], waive the application of clause (i) of subsection (a)(6)(C) in the case of an immigrant who is the spouse, son, or daughter of a United States citizen or of an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence, if it is established to the satisfaction of the [Secretary] that the refusal of admission to the United States of such immigrant alien would result in extreme hardship to the citizen or lawfully permanent resident spouse or parent of such an alien

In this case, the record shows, and the applicant does not contest, that she attempted to enter the United States in October 1988 by falsely claiming she was a U.S. citizen and was subsequently

voluntarily removed to Mexico. *Record of Sworn Statement in Administrative Proceedings*, dated March 27, 2001. Therefore, the applicant is inadmissible under section 212(a)(6)(C)(i) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(6)(C)(i), for willful misrepresentation of a material fact in order to procure an immigration benefit.¹

A waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(i) of the Act is dependent on a showing that the bar to admission imposes extreme hardship on a qualifying relative, which includes the U.S. citizen or lawfully resident spouse or parent of the applicant. Hardship to the applicant or her children can be considered only insofar as it results in hardship to a qualifying relative. The applicant's husband is the only qualifying relative in this case. If extreme hardship to a qualifying relative is established, the applicant is statutorily eligible for a waiver, and USCIS then assesses whether a favorable exercise of discretion is warranted. *See Matter of Mendez-Morales*, 21 I&N Dec. 296, 301 (BIA 1996).

As a qualifying relative is not required to depart the United States as a consequence of an applicant's inadmissibility, two distinct factual scenarios exist should a waiver application be denied: either the qualifying relative will join the applicant to reside abroad or the qualifying relative will remain in the United States. Ascertaining the actual course of action that will be taken is complicated by the fact that an applicant may easily assert a plan for the qualifying relative to relocate abroad or to remain in the United States depending on which scenario presents the greatest prospective hardship, even though no intention exists to carry out the alleged plan in reality. *Cf. Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. 880, 885 (BIA 1994) (addressing separation of minor child from both parents applying for suspension of deportation). Thus, we interpret the statutory language of the various waiver provisions in section 212 of the Act to require an applicant to establish extreme hardship to his or her qualifying relative(s) under both possible scenarios. To endure the hardship of separation when extreme hardship could be avoided by joining the applicant abroad, or to endure the hardship of relocation when extreme hardship could be avoided by remaining in the United States, is a matter of choice and not the result of removal or inadmissibility. As the Board of Immigration Appeals stated in *Matter of Ige*:

[W]e consider the critical issue . . . to be whether a child would suffer extreme hardship if he accompanied his parent abroad. If, as in this case, no hardship would ensue, then the fact that the child might face hardship if left in the United States would be the result of parental choice, not the parent's deportation.

¹ The AAO notes that the applicant is likely also inadmissible under section 212(a)(9)(B)(i)(II) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(i)(II), for being unlawfully present in the United States for a period of more than one year and seeking admission within 10 years of her departure from the United States. However, the record does not clearly indicate the dates of the applicant's presence in the United States or the dates of her departure from the country. In any event, because the applicant has not met her burden of establishing eligibility for a waiver of inadmissibility under section 212(i) of the Act, as explained *infra*, it is unnecessary to determine whether the applicant is also inadmissible for unlawful presence of more than one year, or whether she has established eligibility for a waiver under 212(a)(9)(B)(v) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(9)(B)(v).

Id. See also *Matter of Pilch*, 21 I&N Dec. 627, 632-33 (BIA 1996).

Extreme hardship is “not a definable term of fixed and inflexible content or meaning,” but “necessarily depends upon the facts and circumstances peculiar to each case.” *Matter of Hwang*, 10 I&N Dec. 448, 451 (BIA 1964). In *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, the Board provided a list of factors it deemed relevant in determining whether an alien has established extreme hardship to a qualifying relative. 22 I&N Dec. 560, 565 (BIA 1999). The factors include the presence of a lawful permanent resident or United States citizen spouse or parent in this country; the qualifying relative’s family ties outside the United States; the conditions in the country or countries to which the qualifying relative would relocate and the extent of the qualifying relative’s ties in such countries; the financial impact of departure from this country; and significant conditions of health, particularly when tied to an unavailability of suitable medical care in the country to which the qualifying relative would relocate. *Id.* The Board added that not all of the foregoing factors need be analyzed in any given case and emphasized that the list of factors was not exclusive. *Id.* at 566.

The Board has also held that the common or typical results of deportation, removal and inadmissibility do not constitute extreme hardship, and has listed certain individual hardship factors considered common rather than extreme. These factors include: economic disadvantage, loss of current employment, inability to maintain one’s present standard of living, inability to pursue a chosen profession, separation from family members, severing community ties, cultural readjustment after living in the United States for many years, cultural adjustment of qualifying relatives who have never lived outside the United States, inferior economic and educational opportunities in the foreign country, or inferior medical facilities in the foreign country. See generally *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, 22 I&N Dec. at 568; *Matter of Pilch*, 21 I&N Dec. at 631-32; *Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. at 883; *Matter of Ngai*, 19 I&N Dec. 245, 246-47 (Comm’r 1984); *Matter of Kim*, 15 I&N Dec. 88, 89-90 (BIA 1974); *Matter of Shaughnessy*, 12 I&N Dec. 810, 813 (BIA 1968).

However, though hardships may not be extreme when considered abstractly or individually, the Board has made it clear that “[r]elevant factors, though not extreme in themselves, must be considered in the aggregate in determining whether extreme hardship exists.” *Matter of O-J-O-*, 21 I&N Dec. 381, 383 (BIA 1996) (quoting *Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. at 882). The adjudicator “must consider the entire range of factors concerning hardship in their totality and determine whether the combination of hardships takes the case beyond those hardships ordinarily associated with deportation.” *Id.*

We observe that the actual hardship associated with an abstract hardship factor such as family separation, economic disadvantage, cultural readjustment, et cetera, differs in nature and severity depending on the unique circumstances of each case, as does the cumulative hardship a qualifying relative experiences as a result of aggregated individual hardships. See, e.g., *In re Bing Chih Kao and Mei Tsui Lin*, 23 I&N Dec. 45, 51 (BIA 2001) (distinguishing *Matter of Pilch* regarding hardship faced by qualifying relatives on the basis of variations in the length of residence in the United States and the ability to speak the language of the country to which they would relocate).

Family separation, for instance, has been found to be a common result of inadmissibility or removal in some cases. *See Matter of Shaughnessy*, 12 I&N Dec. at 813. Nevertheless, family ties are to be considered in analyzing hardship. *See Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, 22 I&N Dec. at 565-66. The question of whether family separation is the ordinary result of inadmissibility or removal may depend on the nature of family relationship considered. For example, in *Matter of Shaughnessy*, the Board considered the scenario of parents being separated from their soon-to-be adult son, finding that this separation would not result in extreme hardship to the parents. *Id.* at 811-12; *see also U.S. v. Arrieta*, 224 F.3d 1076, 1082 (9th Cir. 2000) (“Mr. Arrieta was not a spouse, but a son and brother. It was evident from the record that the effect of the deportation order would be separation rather than relocation.”). In *Matter of Cervantes-Gonzalez*, the Board considered the scenario of the respondent’s spouse accompanying him to Mexico, finding that she would not experience extreme hardship from losing “physical proximity to her family” in the United States. 22 I&N Dec. at 566-67.

The decision in *Cervantes-Gonzalez* reflects the norm that spouses reside with one another and establish a life together such that separating from one another is likely to result in substantial hardship. It is common for both spouses to relocate abroad if one of them is not allowed to stay in the United States, which typically results in separation from other family members living in the United States. Other decisions reflect the expectation that minor children will remain with their parents, upon whom they usually depend for financial and emotional support. *See, e.g., Matter of Ige*, 20 I&N Dec. at 886 (“[I]t is generally preferable for children to be brought up by their parents.”). Therefore, the most important single hardship factor may be separation, particularly where spouses and minor children are concerned. *Salcido-Salcido*, 138 F.3d at 1293 (quoting *Contreras-Buenfil v. INS*, 712 F.2d 401, 403 (9th Cir. 1983)); *Cerrillo-Perez*, 809 F.2d at 1422.

Regardless of the type of family relationship involved, the hardship resulting from family separation is determined based on the actual impact of separation on an applicant, and all hardships must be considered in determining whether the combination of hardships takes the case beyond the consequences ordinarily associated with removal or inadmissibility. *Matter of O-J-O-*, 21 I&N Dec. at 383. Nevertheless, though we require an applicant to show that a qualifying relative would experience extreme hardship both in the event of relocation and in the event of separation, in analyzing the latter scenario, we give considerable, if not predominant, weight to the hardship of separation itself, particularly in cases involving the separation of spouses from one another and/or minor children from a parent. *Salcido-Salcido*, 138 F.3d at 1293.

In this case, the applicant’s husband, [REDACTED] states he cannot bear to be without his wife and would become “doleful and withdrawn.” [REDACTED] states his wife manages to balance having children, grandchildren, cleaning the house, and taking care of him. He states he barely has time to take care of himself let alone her family if she should leave the United States. In addition, [REDACTED] contends he has joint arthritis and that when he’s in such pain that it is hard to get around the house, his wife is there with the medicine and gives him massages to relieve the pain. *Letters from* [REDACTED] both dated February 19, 2008.

A letter from a psychologist states that [REDACTED] has been experiencing significant worries, sadness, and fears regarding the possible separation from his wife. According to the psychologist, [REDACTED] scored in the "moderate range" for anxiety and depression. The psychologist diagnosed [REDACTED] with Adjustment Disorder of Adult Life with Mixed Anxiety and Depressed Mood. *Adult Evaluation Report*, dated June 23, 2007.

A letter from [REDACTED] brother states that [REDACTED] has severe arthritis in his hands, arms, and legs and contends that if he had to work more overtime, he would develop other health problems such as stress, depression, and insomnia. *Letter from [REDACTED]*, dated March 24, 2008.

After a careful review of the record, it is not evident from the record that the applicant's husband will suffer extreme hardship as a result of the applicant's waiver being denied.

The AAO recognizes that [REDACTED] will suffer hardship if his wife's waiver application were denied and is sympathetic to the family's circumstances. However, [REDACTED] himself does not discuss the possibility of moving to Mexico to avoid the hardship of separation and he does not address whether such a move would represent a hardship to him. Although counsel contends [REDACTED] has no ties to anyone outside of the United States, does not speak Spanish, and, therefore, will be limited in finding employment in Mexico, *Appeal of Decision to Deny Waiver of Grounds of Inadmissibility, supra*, the unsupported assertions of counsel do not constitute evidence. *Matter of Obaigbena*, 19 I&N Dec. 533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Laureano*, 19 I&N Dec. 1 (BIA 1983); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980). In any event, there is insufficient evidence to show that the hardship [REDACTED] would experience upon relocation to Mexico would be any more difficult than would normally be expected. There is no allegation that his situation is unique or atypical compared to other individuals in similar circumstances. *See Perez v. INS*, 96 F.3d 390 (9th Cir. 1996) (defining extreme hardship as hardship that was unusual or beyond that which would normally be expected upon deportation).

If [REDACTED] decides to stay in the United States, their situation is typical of individuals separated as a result of deportation or exclusion and does not rise to the level of extreme hardship based on the record. Federal courts and the BIA have repeatedly held that the common results of deportation or exclusion are insufficient to prove extreme hardship. For example, *Matter of Pilch, supra*, held that emotional hardship caused by severing family and community ties is a common result of deportation and does not constitute extreme hardship. In addition, *Perez v. INS*, 96 F.3d 390 (9th Cir. 1996), held that the common results of deportation are insufficient to prove extreme hardship and defined extreme hardship as hardship that was unusual or beyond that which would normally be expected upon deportation. *See also Hassan v. INS*, 927 F.2d 465, 468 (9th Cir. 1991) (uprooting of family and separation from friends does not necessarily amount to extreme hardship but rather represents the type of inconvenience and hardship experienced by the families of most aliens being deported).

Regarding the financial hardship claim, the most recent tax documents in the record indicate that the applicant has not worked at any time during her marriage to [REDACTED]. *2006 U.S. Individual Income*

Tax Return (Form 1040), February 3, 2007 (indicating the applicant's occupation as "homemaker"). Although the applicant's Biographic Information form indicates she worked in housekeeping and office cleaning until January 2007, there is no evidence addressing her income or wages. *Biographic Information (Form G-325A)*, dated February 19, 2008, and July 27, 2007. Therefore, there is no evidence showing that the applicant helped to financially support the family. To the extent the applicant has three children from her first marriage and a grandchild, the record indicates that the applicant's oldest son is currently twenty-five years old and lives in Mexico. The applicant's oldest daughter is currently twenty years old and working in the United States. *Cf. Letter from [REDACTED] supra* (stating that the applicant drives her daughter to work). Without more detailed information, the AAO is not in the position to attribute any financial difficulties [REDACTED] may experience to the applicant's departure. In any event, even assuming some economic hardship, the mere showing of economic detriment to qualifying family members is insufficient to warrant a finding of extreme hardship. *INS v. Jong Ha Wang*, 450 U.S. 139 (1981); *Matter of Shaughnessy*, 12 I&N Dec. 810 (BIA 1968) (holding that separation of family members and financial difficulties alone do not establish extreme hardship).

Regarding the psychological evaluation, the AAO notes that the evaluation in the record is based on a single interview the psychologist conducted with [REDACTED]. The record thus fails to reflect an ongoing relationship between a mental health professional and the applicant's husband. In addition, the psychologist contends that [REDACTED] anxiety and depression is related to the possibility of being separated from his wife, but she does not comment on whether his mental health might improve if he relocated to Mexico to be with his wife. Moreover, there is no evidence that there is a history of treatment for depression or anxiety, and the applicant does not discuss the availability of mental health care in Mexico. In sum, the conclusions reached in the submitted evaluation do not reflect the insight and elaboration commensurate with an established relationship with a mental health professional, thereby diminishing the evaluation's value to a determination of extreme hardship.

With respect to [REDACTED] arthritis, although the record contains two pages of [REDACTED] medical records and [REDACTED] brother confirms that he has arthritis, there is no letter in plain language from any health care professional addressing the diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, or severity of [REDACTED] arthritis. Without more detailed information, the AAO is not in the position to reach conclusions regarding the severity of any medical condition or the treatment and assistance needed.

A review of the documentation in the record fails to establish the existence of extreme hardship to the applicant's husband caused by the applicant's inadmissibility to the United States. Having found the applicant statutorily ineligible for relief, no purpose would be served in discussing whether she merits a waiver as a matter of discretion.

In proceedings for application for waiver of grounds of inadmissibility, the burden of proving eligibility remains entirely with the applicant. *See* Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. *Here*, the applicant has not met that burden. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.