

REFUGEE LAW AND COMPARATIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
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Unit 6: Persecution, standards of proof, and the exercise of discretion in asylum and withholding under U.S. law

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EXCERPTS FROM THE UNHCR HANDBOOK

(b) Persecution

51. There is no universally accepted definition of “persecution”, and various attempts to formulate such a definition have met with little success. From Article 33 of the 1951 Convention, it may be inferred that a threat to life or freedom on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group is always persecution. Other serious violations of human rights – for the same reasons – would also constitute persecution.

52. Whether other prejudicial actions or threats would amount to persecution will depend on the circumstances of each case, including the subjective element to which reference has been made in the preceding para. graphs. The subjective character of fear of persecution requires an evaluation of the opinions and feelings of the person concerned. It is also in the light of such opinions and feelings that any actual or anticipated measures against him must necessarily be viewed. Due to variations in the psychological make-up of individuals and in the circumstances of each case, interpretations of what amounts to persecution are bound to vary.

53. In addition, an applicant may have been subjected to various measures not in themselves amounting to persecution (e.g. discrimination in different forms), in some cases combined with other adverse factors (e.g. general atmosphere of insecurity in the country of origin). In such situations, the various elements involved may, if taken together, produce an effect on the mind of the applicant that can reasonably justify a claim to well-founded fear of persecution on “cumulative grounds”. Needless to say, it is not possible to lay down a general rule as to what cumulative reasons can give rise to a valid claim to refugee status. This will necessarily depend on all the circumstances, including the particular geographical, historical and ethnological context.

(c) Discrimination

54. Differences in the treatment of various groups do indeed exist to a greater or lesser extent in many societies. Persons who receive less favourable treatment as a result of such differences are not necessarily victims of persecution. It is only in certain circumstances that discrimination will amount to persecution. This would be so if measures of discrimination lead to consequences of a substantially prejudicial nature for the person concerned, e.g. serious restrictions on his right to earn his livelihood, his right to practise his religion, or his access to normally available educational facilities.

55. Where measures of discrimination are, in themselves, not of a serious character, they may nevertheless give rise to a reasonable fear of persecution if they produce, in the mind of the person concerned, a feeling of apprehension and insecurity as regards his future existence. Whether or not such measures of discrimination in themselves amount to persecution must be determined in the light of all the circumstances. A claim to fear of persecution will of course be stronger where a person has been the victim of a number

of discriminatory measures of this type and where there is thus a cumulative element involved.⁸

(d) Punishment

56. Persecution must be distinguished from punishment for a common law offence. Persons fleeing from prosecution or punishment for such an offence are not normally refugees. It should be recalled that a refugee is a victim – or potential victim – of injustice, not a fugitive from justice.

57. The above distinction may, however, occasionally be obscured. In the first place, a person guilty of a common law offence may be liable to excessive punishment, which may amount to persecution within the meaning of the definition. Moreover, penal prosecution for a reason mentioned in the definition (for example, in respect of “illegal” religious instruction given to a child) may in itself amount to persecution.

58. Secondly, there may be cases in which a person, besides fearing prosecution or punishment for a common law crime, may also have “well founded fear of persecution”. In such cases the person concerned is a refugee. It may, however, be necessary to consider whether the crime in question is not of such a serious character as to bring the applicant within the scope of one of the exclusion clauses.⁹

59. In order to determine whether prosecution amounts to persecution, it will also be necessary to refer to the laws of the country concerned, for it is possible for a law not to be in conformity with accepted human rights standards. More often, however, it may not be the law but its application that is discriminatory. Prosecution for an offence against “public order”, e.g. for distribution of pamphlets, could for example be a vehicle for the persecution of the individual on the grounds of the political content of the publication.

60. In such cases, due to the obvious difficulty involved in evaluating the laws of another country, national authorities may frequently have to take decisions by using their own national legislation as a yardstick. Moreover, recourse may usefully be had to the principles set out in the various international instruments relating to human rights, in particular the International Covenants on Human Rights, which contain binding commitments for the States parties and are instruments to which many States parties to the 1951 Convention have acceded.

I.N.S. v. Cardoza-Fonseca, 480 U.S. 421 (1987)

107 S.Ct. 1207, 94 L.Ed.2d 434, 55 USLW 4313

KeyCite Yellow Flag - Negative Treatment
Not Followed as Dicta Haitian Centers Council, Inc. v. McNary,
E.D.N.Y., April 6, 1992

107 S.Ct. 1207
Supreme Court of the United States

IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION
SERVICE, Petitioner

v.

Luz Marina CARDOZA-FONSECA.

No. 85-782.

Argued Oct. 7, 1986.

Decided March 9, 1987.

Alien appealed decision of the Board of Immigration Appeals, arguing that she was eligible for consideration for asylum. The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, 767 F.2d 1448, reversed and remanded, and certiorari was granted. The Supreme Court, Justice Stevens, held that, to show "well-founded fear of persecution," alien seeking asylum need not prove that it is "more likely than not" that he or she will be persecuted in his or her own country.

Affirmed.

Justice Blackmun filed a concurring opinion.

Justice Scalia filed an opinion concurring in judgment.

Justice Powell filed dissenting opinion in which Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justice White joined.

Opinion

*423 Justice STEVENS delivered the opinion of the Court.

Since 1980, the Immigration and Nationality Act has provided two methods through which an otherwise deportable alien who claims that he will be persecuted **1209 if deported can seek relief. Section 243(h) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1253(h), requires the Attorney General to withhold deportation of an alien who demonstrates that

his "life or freedom would be threatened" on account of one of the listed factors if he is deported. In *INS v. Stevic*, 467 U.S. 407, 104 S.Ct. 2489, 81 L.Ed.2d 321 (1984), we held that to qualify for this entitlement to withholding of deportation, an alien must demonstrate that "it is more likely than not that the alien would be subject to persecution" in the country to which he would be returned. *Id.*, at 429-430, 104 S.Ct., at 2501. The Refugee Act of 1980, 94 Stat. 102, also established a second type of broader relief. Section 208(a) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1158(a), authorizes the Attorney General, in his discretion, to grant asylum to an alien who is unable or unwilling to return to his home country "because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." § 101(a)(42), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(42).

In *Stevic*, we rejected an alien's contention that the § 208(a) "well-founded fear" standard governs applications for withholding of deportation under § 243(h). Similarly, today we reject the Government's contention that the § 243(h) standard, which requires an alien to show that he is more likely than not to be subject to persecution, governs applications for asylum under § 208(a). Congress used different, broader language to define the term "refugee" as used in § 208(a) than it used to describe the class of aliens who have *424 a right to withholding of deportation under § 243(h). The Act's establishment of a broad class of refugees who are eligible for a discretionary grant of asylum, and a narrower class of aliens who are given a statutory right not to be deported to the country where they are in danger, mirrors the provisions of the United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which provided the motivation for the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980. In addition, the legislative history of the 1980 Act makes it perfectly clear that Congress did not intend the class of aliens who qualify as refugees to be coextensive with the class who qualify for § 243(h) relief.

I

Respondent is a 38-year-old Nicaraguan citizen who entered the United States in 1979 as a visitor. After she remained in the United States longer than permitted, and failed to take advantage of the Immigration and

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Naturalization Service's (INS) offer of voluntary departure, the INS commenced deportation proceedings against her. Respondent conceded that she was in the country illegally, but requested withholding of deportation pursuant to § 243(h) and asylum as a refugee pursuant to § 208(a).

To support her request under § 243(h), respondent attempted to show that if she were returned to Nicaragua her "life or freedom would be threatened" on account of her political views; to support her request under § 208(a), she attempted to show that she had a "well-founded fear of persecution" upon her return. The evidence supporting both claims related primarily to the activities of respondent's brother who had been tortured and imprisoned because of his political activities in Nicaragua. Both respondent and her brother testified that they believed the Sandinistas knew that the two of them had fled Nicaragua together and that even though she had not been active politically herself, she would be interrogated about her brother's whereabouts and *425 activities. Respondent also testified that because of her brother's status, her own political opposition to the Sandinistas would be brought to **1210 that government's attention. Based on these facts, respondent claimed that she would be tortured if forced to return.

The Immigration Judge applied the same standard in evaluating respondent's claim for withholding of deportation under § 243(h) as he did in evaluating her application for asylum under § 208(a). He found that she had not established "a clear probability of persecution" and therefore was not entitled to either form of relief. App. to Pet. for Cert. 27a. On appeal, the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) agreed that respondent had "failed to establish that she would suffer persecution within the meaning of section 208(a) or 243(h) of the Immigration and Nationality Act." *Id.*, at 21a.

[1]. [2] In the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, respondent did not challenge the BIA's decision that she was not entitled to withholding of deportation under § 243(h), but argued that she was eligible for consideration for asylum under § 208(a), and contended that the Immigration Judge and BIA erred in applying the "more likely than not" standard of proof from § 243(h) to her § 208(a) asylum claim. Instead, she asserted, they should have applied the "well-founded fear" standard, which she considered to be more generous. The court agreed. Relying on both the text and the structure of the Act, the court held that the "well-founded fear" standard which

governs asylum proceedings is different, and in fact more generous, than the "clear probability" standard which governs withholding of deportation proceedings. 767 F.2d 1448, 1452-1453 (CA9 1985). Agreeing with the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, the court interpreted the standard to require asylum applicants to present "specific facts" through objective evidence to prove either past persecution or 'good reason' to fear future persecution." *Id.*, at 1453 (citing *Carvajal-Munoz v. INS*, 743 F.2d 562, 574 (CA7 1984)). *426 The court remanded respondent's asylum claim to the BIA to evaluate under the proper legal standard. We granted certiorari to resolve a Circuit conflict on this important question.² 475 U.S. 1009, 106 S.Ct. 1181, 89 L.Ed.2d 298 (1986).³

***427 **1211 II**

The Refugee Act of 1980 established a new statutory procedure for granting asylum to refugees.⁴ The 1980 Act added a new § 208(a) to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, reading as follows:

"The Attorney General shall establish a procedure for an alien physically present in the United States or at a land border or port of entry, irrespective of such alien's status, to apply for asylum, and the alien may be granted asylum in the discretion of the Attorney General if the Attorney General determines that such alien is a refugee within the meaning of section 1101(a)(42)(A) of this title." 94 Stat. 105, 8 U.S.C. § 1158(a).

[3] Under this section, eligibility for asylum depends entirely on the Attorney General's determination that an alien is a *428 "refugee," as that term is defined in § 101(a)(42), which was also added to the Act in 1980. That section provides:

"The term 'refugee' means (A) any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social

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group, or political opinion....” 94 Stat. 102, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(42).

Thus, the “persecution or well-founded fear of persecution” standard governs the Attorney General’s determination whether an alien is eligible for asylum.⁵

In addition to establishing a statutory asylum process, the 1980 Act amended the withholding of deportation provision,⁶ **1212 *429 § 243(h). See *Stevic*, 467 U.S., at 421, n. 15, 104 S.Ct., at 2496, n. 15. Prior to 1968, the Attorney General had discretion whether to grant withholding of deportation to aliens under § 243(h). In 1968, however, the United States agreed to comply with the substantive provisions of Articles 2 through 34 of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. See 19 U.S.T. 6223, 6259–6276, T.I.A.S. No. 6577 (1968); see generally *Stevic*, *supra*, at 416–417, 104 S.Ct., at 2494. Article 33.1 of the Convention, 189 U.N.T.S. 150, 176 (1954), reprinted in 19 U.S.T. 6259, 6276, which is the counterpart of § 243(h) of our statute, imposed a mandatory duty on contracting States not to return an alien to a country where his “life or freedom would be threatened” on account of one of the enumerated reasons.⁷ See *infra*, at 1217–1218. Thus, although § 243(h) itself did not constrain the Attorney General’s discretion after 1968, presumably he honored the dictates of the United Nations Convention.⁸ In any event, the 1980 Act removed the Attorney General’s discretion in § 243(h) proceedings.⁹

*430 In *Stevic* we considered it significant that in enacting the 1980 Act Congress did not amend the standard of eligibility for relief under § 243(h). While the terms “refugee” and hence “well-founded fear” were made an integral part of the § 208(a) procedure, they continued to play no part in § 243(h). Thus we held that the prior consistent construction of § 243(h) that required an applicant for withholding of deportation to demonstrate a “clear probability of persecution” upon deportation remained in force. Of course, this reasoning, based in large part on the plain language of § 243(h), is of no avail here since § 208(a) expressly provides that the “well-founded fear” standard governs eligibility for asylum.

[⁴] The Government argues, however, that even though the “well-founded fear” standard is applicable, there is no difference between it and the “would be threatened” test of § 243(h). It asks us to hold that the only way an applicant can demonstrate a “well-founded fear of

persecution” is to prove a “clear probability of persecution.” The statutory language does not lend itself to this reading.

To begin with, the language Congress used to describe the two standards conveys very different meanings. The “would be threatened” language of § 243(h) has no subjective component, but instead requires the alien to establish by objective evidence that it is more likely than not that he or she will be subject to persecution upon deportation.¹⁰ See *Stevic*, *supra*. In contrast, the reference to “fear” in the § 208(a) standard obviously makes the eligibility determination turn to some extent on the subjective mental state of the *431 alien.¹¹ “The linguistic **1213 difference between the words ‘well-founded fear’ and ‘clear probability’ may be as striking as that between a subjective and an objective frame of reference.... We simply cannot conclude that the standards are identical.” *Guevara-Flores v. INS*, 786 F.2d 1242, 1250 (CA5 1986), cert. pending, No. 86–388; see also *Carcamo-Flores v. INS*, 805 F.2d 60, 64 (CA2 1986); 767 F.2d, at 1452 (case below).

That the fear must be “well-founded” does not alter the obvious focus on the individual’s subjective beliefs, nor does it transform the standard into a “more likely than not” one. One can certainly have a well-founded fear of an event happening when there is less than a 50% chance of the occurrence taking place. As one leading authority has pointed out:

“Let us ... presume that it is known that in the applicant’s country of origin every tenth adult male person is either put to death or sent to some remote labor camp.... In such a case it would be only too apparent that anyone who has managed to escape from the country in question will have ‘well-founded fear of being persecuted’ upon his eventual return.” 1 A. Grahl-Madsen, *The Status of Refugees in International Law* 180 (1966).

This ordinary and obvious meaning of the phrase is not to be lightly discounted. See *Russello v. United States*, 464 U.S. 16, 21, 104 S.Ct. 296, 299, 78 L.Ed.2d 17 (1983); *Ernst & Ernst v. Hochfelder*, 425 U.S. 185, 198–199, 96 S.Ct. 1375, 1383–1384, 47 L.Ed.2d 668 (1976). With regard to this very statutory scheme, we have considered ourselves bound to “‘assume ‘that the legislative purpose is expressed by the ordinary meaning of the words used.’” *INS v. Phinpathya*, 464 U.S. 183, 189, 104 S.Ct. 584, 589, 78 L.Ed.2d 401 (1984) (quoting *432 *American*

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Tobacco Co. v. Patterson, 456 U.S. 63, 68, 102 S.Ct. 1534, 1537, 71 L.Ed.2d 748 (1982), in turn quoting *Richards v. United States*, 369 U.S. 1, 9, 82 S.Ct. 585, 591, 7 L.Ed.2d 492 (1962)).

The different emphasis of the two standards which is so clear on the face of the statute is significantly highlighted by the fact that the same Congress simultaneously drafted § 208(a) and amended § 243(h). In doing so, Congress chose to maintain the old standard in § 243(h), but to incorporate a different standard in § 208(a). "[W]here Congress includes particular language in one section of a statute but omits it in another section of the same Act, it is generally presumed that Congress acts intentionally and purposely in the disparate inclusion or exclusion." *Russello v. United States*, *supra*, 464 U.S., at 23, 104 S.Ct., at 300 (quoting *United States v. Wong Kim Bo*, 472 F.2d 720, 722 (CA5 1972)). The contrast between the language used in the two standards, and the fact that Congress used a new standard to define the term "refugee," certainly indicate that Congress intended the two standards to differ.

III

The message conveyed by the plain language of the Act is confirmed by an examination of its history.¹² Three aspects of that history are particularly compelling: The pre-1980 experience under § 203(a)(7), the only prior statute dealing with asylum; the abundant evidence of an intent to conform the definition of "refugee" and our asylum law to the United Nations Protocol to which the United States has been bound *433 **1214 since 1968; and the fact that Congress declined to enact the Senate version of the bill that would have made a refugee ineligible for asylum unless "his deportation or return would be prohibited by § 243(h)."

The Practice Under § 203(a)(7).

The statutory definition of the term "refugee" contained in § 101(a)(42) applies to two asylum provisions within the Immigration and Nationality Act.¹³ Section 207, 8 U.S.C. § 1157, governs the admission of refugees who seek admission from foreign countries. Section 208, 8 U.S.C. § 1158, sets out the process by which refugees currently in the United States may be granted asylum. Prior to the 1980 amendments there was no statutory basis for

granting asylum to aliens who applied from within the United States." Asylum for aliens applying for admission from foreign countries had, however, been the subject of a previous statutory provision, and Congress' intent with respect to the changes that it sought to create in that statute are instructive in discerning the meaning of the term "well-founded fear."

Section § 203(a)(7) of the pre-1980 statute authorized the Attorney General to permit "conditional entry" to a certain number of refugees fleeing from Communist-dominated areas or the Middle East "because of persecution or fear of persecution on account of race, religion, or political opinion." 79 *434 Stat. 913, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(a)(7) (1976 ed.). The standard that was applied to aliens seeking admission pursuant to § 203(a)(7) was unquestionably more lenient than the "clear probability" standard applied in § 243(h) proceedings. In *Matter of Tan*, 12 I. & N. Dec. 564, 569-570 (1967), for example, the BIA "found no support" for the argument that "an alien deportee is required to do no more than meet the standards applied under section 203(a)(7) of the Act when seeking relief under section 243(h)." Similarly, in *Matter of Adamska*, 12 I. & N. Dec. 201, 202 (1967), the Board held that an alien's inability to satisfy § 243(h) was not determinative of her eligibility under the "substantially broader" standards of § 203(a)(7). One of the differences the Board highlighted between the statutes was that § 243(h) requires a showing that the applicant "would be" subject to persecution, while § 203(a)(7) only required a showing that the applicant was unwilling to return "because of persecution or fear of persecution." 12 I. & N., at 202 (emphasis in original). In sum, it was repeatedly recognized that the standards were significantly different.¹⁵

At first glance one might conclude that this wide practice under the old § 203(a)(7), which spoke of "fear of persecution," is not probative of the meaning of the term "well-founded fear of persecution" which Congress adopted in 1980. Analysis of the legislative history, however, demonstrates that Congress added the "well-founded" language only because that was the language incorporated by the United Nations Protocol to which Congress sought to conform. See *infra*, at 1215-1216. Congress was told that the extant asylum procedure *435 for refugees outside of the **1215 United States was acceptable under the Protocol, except for the fact that it made various unacceptable geographic and political distinctions.¹⁶ The legislative history indicates that Congress in no way wished to modify the standard

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that had been used under § 203(a)(7).¹⁷ *436 Adoption of the INS's argument that the term "well-founded fear" requires a showing of clear probability of persecution would clearly do violence to Congress' intent that the standard for admission under § 207 be no different than the one previously applied under § 203(a)(7).¹⁸

The United Nations Protocol.

If one thing is clear from the legislative history of the new definition of "refugee," and indeed the entire 1980 Act, it is that one of Congress' primary purposes was to bring United States refugee law into conformance **1216 with the 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 19 U.S.T. 6223, T.I.A.S. No. 6577, to which the United States *437 acceded in 1968.¹⁹ Indeed, the definition of "refugee" that Congress adopted, see *supra*, at 1211, is virtually identical to the one prescribed by Article 1(2) of the Convention which defines a "refugee" as an individual who

"owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Compare 19 U.S.T. 6225 with 19 U.S.T. 6261. Not only did Congress adopt the Protocol's standard in the statute, but there were also many statements indicating Congress' intent that the new statutory definition of "refugee" be interpreted in conformance with the Protocol's definition. The Conference Committee Report, for example, stated that the definition was accepted "with the understanding that it is based directly upon the language of the Protocol and it is intended that the provision be construed consistent with the Protocol." S.Rep. No. 96-590, p. 20 (1980); see also H.R.Rep., at 9. It is thus appropriate to consider what the phrase "well-founded fear" means with relation to the Protocol.

The origin of the Protocol's definition of "refugee" is found in the 1946 Constitution of the International Refugee Organization (IRO). See 62 Stat. 3037. The IRO defined a "refugee" as a person who had a "valid objection" to returning to his country of nationality, and specified that "fear, based on reasonable grounds of

persecution because of race, religion, nationality, or political opinions ..." constituted a valid objection. See IRO Constitution, Annex 1, Pt. 1, § C1(a)(i). The term was then incorporated in the United Nations Convention *438 Relating to the Status of Refugees,²⁰ 189 U.N.T.S. 150 (July 28, 1951). The Committee that drafted the provision explained that "[t]he expression 'well-founded fear of being the victim of persecution ...' means that a person has either been actually a victim of persecution or can show good reason why he fears persecution." U.N.Rep., at 39. The 1967 Protocol incorporated the "well-founded fear" test, without modification. The standard, as it has been consistently understood by those who drafted it, as well as those drafting the documents that adopted it, certainly does not require an alien to show that it is more likely than not that he will be persecuted **1217 in order to be classified as a "refugee."²¹

In interpreting the Protocol's definition of "refugee" we are further guided by the analysis set forth in the Office of the *439 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status (Geneva, 1979).²² The Handbook explains that "[i]n general, the applicant's fear should be considered well-founded if he can establish, to a reasonable degree, that his continued stay in his country of origin has become intolerable to him for the reasons stated in the definition, or would for the same reasons be intolerable if he returned there." *Id.*, at Ch. II B(2)(a) § 42; see also *id.*, §§ 37-41.

The High Commissioner's analysis of the United Nations' standard is consistent with our own examination of the origins of the Protocol's definition,²³ as well as the conclusions of *440 many scholars who have studied the matter.²⁴ There is simply no room in the United Nations' definition for concluding that because an applicant only has a 10% chance of being shot, tortured, or otherwise persecuted, that he or she has no "well-founded fear" of the event happening. See *supra*, at 1213. As we pointed out in *Stevic*, a moderate interpretation of the "well-founded fear" standard would indicate "that so long as an objective situation is established by the evidence, it need not be shown that the situation will probably result in persecution, but it is enough that persecution is a reasonable possibility." 467 U.S., at 424-425, 104 S.Ct., at 2498.

In *Stevic*, we dealt with the issue of withholding of deportation, or *nonrefoulement*, under § 243(h). This provision corresponds to Article 33.1 of the Convention.²⁵

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****1218** Significantly though, Article 33.1 does not extend this right to everyone who meets the definition of "refugee." Rather, it provides that "[n]o Contracting State shall expel or return ('refouler') a *refugee* in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers or territories *where his life or freedom would be threatened* on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership or a particular social group or political opinion." 19 U.S.T., at 6276, 189 U.N.T.S., at 176 (emphasis added). Thus, Article 33.1 requires that an applicant satisfy two burdens: first, that he or she be a "refugee," *i.e.*, prove at least a "well-founded ***441** fear of persecution"; second, that the "refugee" show that his or her life or freedom "would be threatened" if deported. Section 243(h)'s imposition of a "would be threatened" requirement is entirely consistent with the United States' obligations under the Protocol.

Section 208(a), by contrast, is a discretionary mechanism which gives the Attorney General the *authority* to grant the broader relief of asylum to refugees. As such, it does not correspond to Article 33 of the Convention, but instead corresponds to Article 34. See *Carvajal-Munoz*, 743 F.2d, at 574, n. 15. That Article provides that the contracting States "shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees...." Like § 208(a), the provision is precatory; it does not require the implementing authority actually to grant asylum to all those who are eligible. Also like § 208(a), an alien must only show that he or she is a "refugee" to establish eligibility for relief. No further showing that he or she "would be" persecuted is required.

Thus, as made binding on the United States through the Protocol, Article 34 provides for a precatory, or discretionary, benefit for the entire class of persons who qualify as "refugees," whereas Article 33.1 provides an entitlement for the subcategory that "would be threatened" with persecution upon their return. This precise distinction between the broad class of refugees and the subcategory entitled to § 243(h) relief is plainly revealed in the 1980 Act. See *Stevic*, 467 U.S., at 428, n. 22, 104 S.Ct., at 2500, n. 22.

Congress' Rejection of S. 643.

Both the House bill, H.R. 2816, 96th Cong., 1st Sess. (1979), and the Senate bill, S. 643, 96th Cong., 1st Sess. (1979), provided that an alien must be a "refugee" within the meaning of the Act in order to be eligible for asylum. The two bills differed, however, in that the House bill

authorized the Attorney General, in his discretion, to grant asylum to any refugee, whereas the Senate bill imposed the additional ***442** requirement that a refugee could not obtain asylum unless "his deportation or return would be prohibited under section 243(h)." ²⁶ S.Rep., at 26. Although this restriction, if adopted, would have curtailed the Attorney General's discretion to grant asylum to refugees pursuant to § 208(a), it would not have affected the standard used to determine whether an alien is a "refugee." Thus, the inclusion of this prohibition in the Senate bill indicates that the Senate recognized that there is a difference between the "well-founded fear" standard and the clear probability standard." The ****1219** enactment of the House bill rather than the Senate bill in turn demonstrates that Congress eventually refused to restrict eligibility for asylum only to aliens meeting the stricter standard. "Few principles of statutory construction are more compelling than the proposition that Congress does not intend *sub* ***443** *silentio* to enact statutory language that it has earlier discarded in favor of other language." *Nachman Corp. v. Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation*, 446 U.S. 359, 392–393, 100 S.Ct. 1723, 1741–1742, 64 L.Ed.2d 354 (1980) (Stewart, J., dissenting); cf. *Gulf Oil Corp. v. Copp Paving Co.*, 419 U.S. 186, 200, 95 S.Ct. 392, 401, 42 L.Ed.2d 378 (1974); *Russello v. United States*, 464 U.S., at 23, 104 S.Ct., at 300.

IV

The INS makes two major arguments to support its contention that we should reverse the Court of Appeals and hold that an applicant can only show a "well-founded fear of persecution" by proving that it is more likely than not that he or she will be persecuted. We reject both of these arguments: the first ignores the structure of the Act; the second misconstrues the federal courts' role in reviewing an agency's statutory construction.

First, the INS repeatedly argues that the structure of the Act dictates a decision in its favor, since it is anomalous for § 208(a), which affords greater benefits than § 243(h), see n. 6, *supra*, to have a less stringent standard of eligibility. This argument sorely fails because it does not take into account the fact that an alien who satisfies the applicable standard under § 208(a) does not have a *right* to remain in the United States; he or she is simply *eligible* for asylum, if the Attorney General, in his discretion, chooses to grant it. An alien satisfying § 243(h)'s stricter

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standard, in contrast, is automatically entitled to withholding of deportation.²⁸ In *Matter of Salim*, 18 I. & N. Dec. 311 (1982), for example, the Board held that the alien was eligible for both asylum and withholding of deportation, but granted him the more limited remedy only, exercising its discretion to deny him asylum. See also *Walai v. INS*, 552 F.Supp. 998 (SDNY 1982); *Mat *444 of Shirdel*, Interim Decision No. 2958 (BIA Feb. 21, 1984). We do not consider it at all anomalous that out of the entire class of "refugees," those who can show a clear probability of persecution are entitled to mandatory suspension of deportation and eligible for discretionary asylum, while those who can only show a well-founded fear of persecution are not entitled to anything, but are eligible for the discretionary relief of asylum.

There is no basis for the INS's assertion that the discretionary/mandatory distinction has no practical significance. Decisions such as *Matter of Salim*, *supra*, and *Matter of Shirdel*, *supra*, clearly demonstrate the practical import of the distinction. Moreover, the 1980 Act amended § 243(h) for the very purpose of changing it from a discretionary to a mandatory provision. See *supra*, at 1211-1212. Congress surely considered the discretionary/mandatory distinction important then, as it did with respect to the very definition of "refugee" involved here. The House Report provides:

"The Committee carefully considered arguments that the new definition might expand the numbers of refugees eligible **1220 to come to the United States and force substantially greater refugee admissions than the country could absorb. However, merely because an individual or group comes within the definition will not guarantee resettlement in the United States." H.R.Rep., at 10.

This vesting of discretion in the Attorney General is quite typical in the immigration area, see, e.g., *INS v. Jong Ha Wang*, 450 U.S. 139, 101 S.Ct. 1027, 67 L.Ed.2d 123 (1981). If anything is anomalous, it is that the Government now asks us to restrict its discretion to a narrow class of aliens. Congress has assigned to the Attorney General and his delegates the task of making these hard individualized decisions; although Congress could have crafted a narrower definition, it chose to authorize the Attorney General *445 to determine which, if any, eligible refugees should be denied asylum.

The INS's second principal argument in support of the proposition that the "well founded fear" and "clear

probability" standard are equivalent is that the BIA so construes the two standards. The INS argues that the BIA's construction of the Refugee Act of 1980 is entitled to substantial deference, even if we conclude that the Court of Appeals' reading of the statutes is more in keeping with Congress' intent.²⁹ This argument is unpersuasive.

**1221 *446 ^[5] The question whether Congress intended the two standards to be identical is a pure question of statutory construction for the courts to decide. Employing traditional tools of statutory construction, we have concluded that Congress did not intend the two standards to be identical.³⁰ In *447 *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 104 S.Ct. 2778, 81 L.Ed.2d 694 (1984), we explained:

"The judiciary is the final authority on issues of statutory construction and must reject administrative constructions which are contrary to clear congressional *448 intent. [Citing cases.] If a court, employing traditional tools of statutory construction, ascertains that Congress had an intention on the precise question at issue, that intention is the law and must be given effect." *Id.*, at 843, n. 9, 104 S.Ct., at 2782, n. 9 (citations omitted).

The narrow legal question whether the two standards are the same is, of course, quite different from the question of interpretation that arises in each case in which the agency is required to apply either or both standards to a particular set of facts. There is obviously some ambiguity in a term like "well-founded fear" which can only be given concrete meaning through a process of case-by-case adjudication. In that process of filling "any gap left, implicitly or explicitly, by Congress," the courts must respect the interpretation of the agency to which Congress has delegated the responsibility for administering the statutory program. See *Chevron*, *supra*, at 843, 104 S.Ct., at 2781-2782, quoting *Morton v. Ruiz*, 415 U.S. 199, 231, 94 S.Ct. 1055, 1072, 39 L.Ed.2d 270 (1974). But our task today is much narrower, and is well within the province of the judiciary. We do **1222 not attempt to set forth a detailed description of how the "well-founded fear" test should be applied.³¹ Instead, we merely hold that the Immigration Judge and the BIA were incorrect in holding that the two standards are identical.³²

*449 Our analysis of the plain language of the Act, its symmetry with the United Nations Protocol, and its

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legislative history, lead inexorably to the conclusion that to show a "well-founded fear of persecution," an alien need not prove that it is more likely than not that he or she will be persecuted in his or her home country. We find these ordinary canons of statutory construction compelling, even without regard to the longstanding principle of construing any lingering ambiguities in deportation statutes in favor of the alien. See *INS v. Errico*, 385 U.S. 214, 225, 87 S.Ct. 473, 480, 17 L.Ed.2d 318 (1966); *Costello v. INS*, 376 U.S. 120, 128, 84 S.Ct. 580, 585, 11 L.Ed.2d 559 (1964); *Fong Haw Tan v. Phelan*, 333 U.S. 6, 10, 68 S.Ct. 374, 376, 92 L.Ed. 433 (1948).

Deportation is always a harsh measure; it is all the more replete with danger when the alien makes a claim that he or she will be subject to death or persecution if forced to return to his or her home country. In enacting the Refugee Act of 1980 Congress sought to "give the United States sufficient flexibility to respond to situations involving political or religious dissidents and detainees throughout the world." H.R.Rep., at 9. Our holding today increases that flexibility by rejecting the Government's contention that the Attorney General may not even consider granting asylum to one who *450 fails to satisfy the strict § 243(h) standard. Whether or not a "refugee" is eventually granted asylum is a matter which Congress has left for the Attorney General to decide. But it is clear that Congress did not intend to restrict eligibility for that relief to those who could prove that it is more likely than not that they will be persecuted if deported.

The judgment of the Court of Appeals is

Affirmed.

Justice BLACKMUN, concurring.

I join the Court's opinion and judgment. Thus, I accept its "narrow" conclusion that "the Immigration Judge and the BIA were incorrect in holding that the [standards for withholding of deportation and granting asylum] are identical." *Ante*, at 1222. In accordance with this holding, the Court eschews any attempt to give substance to the term "well-founded fear" and leaves that task to the "process of case-by-case adjudication" by the INS, the agency in charge of administering the immigration laws. **1223 *Ante*, at 1221. I write separately and briefly to emphasize my understanding that, in its opinion, the

Court has directed the INS to the appropriate sources from which the agency should derive the meaning of the "well-founded fear" standard, a meaning that will be refined in later adjudication. This emphasis, I believe, is particularly needed where, as here, an agency's previous interpretation of the statutory term is so strikingly contrary to plain language and legislative history.

Thus, as the Court observes, *ante*, at 1212–1213, the very language of the term "well-founded fear" demands a particular type of analysis—an examination of the subjective feelings of an applicant for asylum coupled with an inquiry into the objective nature of the articulated reasons for the fear. Moreover, in describing how, in the 1980 Act, Congress was attempting to bring this country's refugee laws into conformity with the United Nations Protocol, the Court notes that the Act's definition of refugee, wherein the "well-founded fear" term appears, *ante*, at 1211, tracks the language of the *451 Protocol. See *ante*, at 1216. Such language has a rich history of interpretation in international law and scholarly commentaries. See *ante*, at 1216–1218, and nn. 20, 24. While the INS need not ignore other sources of guidance, the above directions by the Court should be significant in the agency's formulation of the "well-founded fear" standard.

Finally, in my view, the well-reasoned opinions of the Courts of Appeals, that almost uniformly have rejected the INS's misreading of statutory language and legislative history, provide an admirable example of the very "case-by-case adjudication" needed for the development of the standard. Although the Court refers to a conflict among these courts, see *ante*, at 1210, n. 2, with one exception, see *ibid.*, all the Courts of Appeals that have addressed this question have concluded that the standards for withholding of deportation and granting asylum are not the same. Rather, differences in opinion have arisen as to the precise formulation of the "well-founded fear" standard.* Such differences can arise only when courts or agencies seriously grapple with the problems of developing a standard, whose form is at first given by the statutory language and the intimations of the legislative *452 history, but whose final contours are shaped by the application of the standard to the facts of specific cases. The efforts of these courts stand in stark contrast to—but, it is sad to say, alone cannot make up for—the years of seemingly purposeful blindness by the INS, which only now begins its task of developing the standard entrusted to its care.

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Justice SCALIA, concurring in the judgment.

I agree with the Court that the plain meaning of “well-founded fear” and the structure of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Act) clearly demonstrate that the “well-founded fear” standard and the “clear probability” standard are not equivalent. I concur in the judgment rather than join the Court’s opinion, however, for two reasons. First, despite having reached the above conclusion, the Court undertakes an exhaustive investigation of the legislative history of the Act. *Ante*, at 1213–1219. It **1224 attempts to justify this inquiry by relying upon the doctrine that if the legislative history of an enactment reveals a “‘clearly expressed legislative intention’ contrary to [the enactment’s] language,” the Court is required to “question the strong presumption that Congress expresses its intent through the language it chooses.” *Ante*, at 1213, n. 12. Although it is true that the Court in recent times has expressed approval of this doctrine, that is to my mind an ill-advised deviation from the venerable principle that if the language of a statute is clear, that language must be given effect—at least in the absence of a patent absurdity. See, e.g., *United States v. Wiltberger*, 18 U.S. (5 Wheat.) 76, 95–96, 5 L.Ed. 37 (1820) (opinion of Marshall, C.J.); [other citations omitted]. Judges interpret laws rather than reconstruct *453 legislators’ intentions. Where the language of those laws is clear, we are not free to replace it with an unenacted legislative intent.

....

I am far more troubled, however, by the Court’s discussion of the question whether the INS’s interpretation of “well-founded fear” is entitled to deference. Since the Court quite rightly concludes that the INS’s interpretation is clearly inconsistent with the plain meaning of that phrase and the structure of the Act, see *ante*, at 1222, 1213, and n. 12, there is simply no need and thus no justification for a discussion of whether the interpretation is entitled to deference. See *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 842–843, 104 S.Ct. 2778, 2781–2782, 81 L.Ed.2d 694 (1984) (“If the intent of Congress is clear, that is the end of the matter; for the court, as well as the agency, must give effect to the unambiguously expressed intent of Congress” (footnote omitted)). Even more *454 unjustifiable, however, is the Court’s use of this superfluous discussion as the occasion to express controversial, and I believe erroneous, views on the meaning of this Court’s decision in *Chevron*. *Chevron*

stated that where there is no “unambiguously expressed intent of Congress,” *id.*, at 843, 104 S.Ct., at 2781–2782, “a court may not substitute its own construction of a statutory provision for a reasonable interpretation made by the administrator of an agency,” *id.*, at 844, 104 S.Ct., at 2782. This Court has consistently interpreted *Chevron*—which has been an extremely important and frequently cited opinion, not only in **1225 this Court but in the Courts of Appeals—as holding that courts must give effect to a reasonable agency interpretation of a statute unless that interpretation is inconsistent with a clearly expressed congressional intent. See, e.g., *Japan Whaling Assn. v. American Cetacean Soc.*, 478 U.S. 221, 233–234, [other citations omitted]. The Court’s discussion is flatly inconsistent with this well-established interpretation. The Court first implies that courts may substitute their interpretation of a statute for that of an agency whenever, “[e]mploying traditional tools of statutory construction,” they are able to reach a conclusion as to the proper interpretation of the statute. *Ante*, at 1220–1221. But this approach would make deference a doctrine of desperation, authorizing courts to defer only if they would otherwise be unable to construe the enactment at issue. This is not an interpretation but an evisceration of *Chevron*.

The Court also implies that courts may substitute their interpretation of a statute for that of an agency whenever they face “a pure question of statutory construction for the courts to decide,” *ante*, at 1220, rather than a “question of interpretation [in which] the agency is required to apply [a legal standard] to a particular set of facts,” *ante*, at 1221. *455 No support is adduced for this proposition, which is contradicted by the case the Court purports to be interpreting, since in *Chevron* the Court deferred to the Environmental Protection Agency’s abstract interpretation of the phrase “stationary source.”

In my view, the Court badly misinterprets *Chevron*. More fundamentally, however, I neither share nor understand the Court’s eagerness to refashion important principles of administrative law in a case in which such questions are completely unnecessary to the decision and have not been fully briefed by the parties.

I concur in the judgment.

Justice POWELL, with whom THE CHIEF JUSTICE and Justice WHITE join, dissenting.

....

17

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With respect to the issue presented by this case, I find the language far more ambiguous than the Court does. Respondent contends that the BIA has fallen into error by equating the objective showings required under §§ 208(a) and 243(h). The Court notes that the language of § 208(a) differs from the language of § 243(h) in that it contemplates a partially subjective inquiry. From this premise, the Court moves with little explanation to the conclusion that the objective inquiries under the two sections necessarily are different.

In reaching this conclusion, the Court gives short shrift to the words “well-founded,” that clearly require some objective basis for the alien’s fear. The critical question presented by this case is whether the objective basis required for a fear of persecution to be “well-founded” differs *in practice* from the objective basis required for there to be a “clear probability” of persecution. Because both standards necessarily contemplate some objective basis, I cannot agree with the Court’s *460 implicit conclusion that the statute resolves this question on its face. In my view, the character of evidence sufficient to meet these two standards is a question best answered by an entity familiar with the types of evidence and issues that arise in such cases. Congress limited eligibility for asylum to those persons whom “the Attorney General determines” to be refugees. See § 208(a), 8 U.S.C. § 1158(a). The Attorney General has delegated the responsibility for making these determinations to the BIA. That Board has examined more of these cases than any court ever has or ever can. It has made a considered judgment that the difference between the “well- **1228 founded” and the “clear probability” standards is of no practical import: that is, the evidence presented in asylum and withholding of deportation cases rarely, if ever, will meet one of these standards without meeting both. This is just the type of expert judgment—formed by the entity to whom Congress has committed the question—to which we should defer.

The Court ignores the practical realities recognized by the expert agency and instead concentrates on semantic niceties. It posits a hypothetical situation in which a government sought to execute every 10th adult male. In its view, fear of such executions would be “well-founded” even if persecution of a particular individual would not be “more likely than not” to occur. See *ante*, at 1213. But this hypothetical is irrelevant; it addresses a mathematically demanding interpretation of “well-founded” that has no relation to the BIA’s actual

treatment of asylum applications. Nor does it address the validity of the BIA’s judgment that evidence presenting this distinction will be encountered infrequently, if ever.

Common sense and human experience support the BIA’s conclusion. Governments rarely persecute people by the numbers. It is highly unlikely that the evidence presented at an asylum or withholding of deportation hearing will demonstrate the mathematically specific risk of persecution posited by the Court’s hypothetical. Taking account of the *461 types of evidence normally available in asylum cases, the BIA has chosen to make a *qualitative* evaluation of “realistic likelihoods.”.....

In sum, the words Congress has chosen—“well-founded” fear—are ambiguous. They contemplate some objective basis without specifying a particular evidentiary threshold. There is no reason to suppose this formulation is inconsistent with the analysis set forth in *Acosta*. The BIA has concluded that a fear is not “well-founded” unless the fear has an objective basis indicating that there is a “realistic likelihood” that persecution would occur. Based on the text of the Act alone, I cannot conclude that this conclusion is unreasonable.

....

IV

Even if I agreed with the Court’s conclusion that there is a significant difference between the standards for asylum and *466 withholding of deportation, I would reverse the decision of the Court of Appeals and uphold the decision of the BIA *in this case*.⁷ A careful reading of the decisions **1231 of the BIA and the Immigration Judge demonstrates that the BIA applied the lower asylum standard to this case.

Respondent’s claim for asylum rested solely on testimony that her brother had experienced difficulties with the authorities in Nicaragua. The Immigration Judge rejected respondent’s claim because he found “no evidence of any substance in the record other than her brother’s claim to asylum.” App. to Pet. for Cert. 27a. He further found:

“None of the evidence indicates that the respondent would be persecuted for political beliefs, whatever they may be, or because she belongs to a particular social group. She has not proven that she or any other members of her family, other than her brother, has [*sic*] been detained, interrogated, arrested and imprisoned,

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tortured and convicted and sentenced by the regime presently in power in Nicaragua." *Ibid*.

The absence of such evidence was particularly probative, because many of the other members of respondent's family—her parents, two sisters, her brother's wife, and her brother's *467 two children—were still in Nicaragua and thus presumably subject to the persecution respondent feared.

On appeal, the BIA affirmed. It decided this case after the passage of the Act, but before its opinion in *Acosta*. At that time, the BIA was confronted with a number of conflicting decisions by Courts of Appeals as to the correct standard for evaluating asylum applications. The BIA noted three different formulations of the "well-founded fear" standard: the "clear probability" test, see *Rejaie v. INS*, 691 F.2d 139 (CA3 1982); the "good reason" test, see *Stevic v. Sava*, 678 F.2d 401 (CA2 1982), rev'd on other grounds, *INS v. Stevic*, 467 U.S. 407, 104 S.Ct. 2489, 81 L.Ed.2d 321 (1984); and the "realistic likelihood" test the BIA had adopted in *Matter of Dunar*,

14 I. & N. Dec. 310 (1973). App. to Pet. for Cert. 21a. See *supra*, at 1226–1227 (discussing *Acosta*). Reviewing the evidence respondent had submitted to the Immigration Judge, the BIA concluded that respondent could not obtain relief under any of the standards.

....

V

In my view, the Court misconstrues the Act and misreads its legislative history. Moreover, neither this Court nor the Court of Appeals has identified an error in the decision of the BIA in *this* case. Neither court has examined the factual findings on which the decision rested, or the legal standard the BIA applied to these facts. I would reverse the decision of the Court of Appeals.

Footnotes

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¹ We explained that the Court of Appeals' decision had rested "on the mistaken premise that every alien who qualifies as a 'refugee' under the statutory definition is also entitled to a withholding of deportation under § 243(h). We find no support for this conclusion in either the language of § 243(h), the structure of the amended Act, or the legislative history." *INS v. Stevic*, 467 U.S., at 428, 104 S.Ct., at 2500.

² Compare *Carcamo-Flores v. INS*, 805 F.2d 60 (CA2 1986); *Guevara-Flores v. INS*, 786 F.2d 1242 (CA5 1986), cert. pending, No. 86–388; *Cardoza-Fonseca v. INS*, 767 F.2d 1448 (CA9 1985) (case below); *Carvajal-Munoz v. INS*, 743 F.2d 562, 574 (CA7 1984); *Youkhanna v. INS*, 749 F.2d 360, 362 (CA6 1984); with *Sankar v. INS*, 757 F.2d 532, 533 (CA3 1985).

The Third Circuit is the only Circuit to decide since our decision in *INS v. Stevic*, 467 U.S. 407, 104 S.Ct. 2489, 81 L.Ed.2d 321 (1984), that the standards remain identical. It reached this conclusion, however, not because post-*Stevic* analysis compelled it, but because it considered itself bound by its pre-*Stevic* decision in *Rejaie v. INS*, 691 F.2d 139 (1982). See *Sankar, supra*, at 533.

³ We have considered whether this case has been rendered moot by the recent enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Pub.L. No. 99–603, 100 Stat. 3359. While nothing in that Act affects the statutory provisions related to asylum or withholding of deportation, Title II of the 1986 Act creates a mechanism by which certain aliens may obtain legalization of their status. Section 201(a) of the 1986 Act establishes that, with certain exceptions, an alien who has resided continuously in the United States in an unlawful status since before January 1, 1982, is entitled to have his or her status adjusted to that of an alien lawfully admitted for temporary residence. An alien who obtains this adjustment of status under the new Act is then eligible for a second adjustment to the status of permanent resident after a waiting period of 18 months. See § 245A(a). An alien who obtains permanent residence status through this route is not, however, eligible for all benefits usually available to permanent residents. For example, aliens who obtain permanent residence through this program are not eligible for certain public welfare benefits for five years after the grant of the new status. See § 245A(h).

The record indicates that respondent may well be eligible for eventual adjustment of status if she makes a timely

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application after the Attorney General establishes the procedures for administering Title II. It would therefore appear that respondent might become a permanent resident by invoking the new procedures even if she is unsuccessful in her pending request for asylum. Nonetheless the possibility of this relief does not render her request for asylum moot. First, the legalization provisions of the 1986 Act are not self-executing, and the procedures for administering the new Act are not yet in place. Even if the benefits were identical, therefore, there is no way of knowing at this time whether respondent will be able to satisfy whatever burden is placed upon her to demonstrate eligibility. Cf. *INS v. Chadha*, 462 U.S. 919, 937, 103 S.Ct. 2764, 2777, 77 L.Ed.2d 317 (1983). Second, respondent might be able to obtain permanent residence through the asylum procedure sooner than through the legalization program; if she satisfies certain conditions, she may become eligible for adjustment of status to that of permanent resident 12 months after a grant of asylum. See 8 CFR §§ 209.1–209.2 (1986). Under Title II of the new Act, by contrast, there is an 18-month waiting period. In light of these factors, we are persuaded that the controversy is not moot. Nor do we believe that the new Act makes it appropriate to exercise our discretion to dismiss the writ of certiorari as improvidently granted. The question presented in this case will arise, and has arisen, in hosts of other asylum proceedings brought by aliens who arrived in the United States after January 1, 1982, or who are seeking entry as refugees from other countries. The importance of the legal issue makes it appropriate for us to address the merits now.

- 4 Prior to the amendments, asylum for aliens who were within the United States had been governed by regulations promulgated by the INS, pursuant to the Attorney General's broad parole authority. See n. 14, *infra*. Asylum for applicants who were not within the United States was generally governed by the now-repealed § 203(a)(7) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(a)(7) (1976 ed.). See *infra*, at 1214.
- 5 It is important to note that the Attorney General is *not required* to grant asylum to everyone who meets the definition of refugee. Instead, a finding that an alien is a refugee does no more than establish that "the alien *may* be granted asylum in the discretion of the Attorney General." § 208(a) (emphasis added). See *Stevic*, 467 U.S., at 423, n. 18, 104 S.Ct., at 2497, n. 18; see also *infra*, at 1218–1220.
- 6 Asylum and withholding of deportation are two distinct forms of relief. First, as we have mentioned, there is no entitlement to asylum, it is only granted to eligible refugees pursuant to the Attorney General's discretion. Once granted, however, asylum affords broader benefits. As the BIA explained in the context of an applicant from Afghanistan who was granted § 243(h) relief but was denied asylum:
"Section 243(h) relief is 'country specific' and accordingly, the applicant here would be presently protected from deportation to Afghanistan pursuant to section 243(h). But that section would not prevent his exclusion and deportation to Pakistan or any other hospitable country under section 237(a) if that country will accept him. In contrast, asylum is a greater form of relief. When granted asylum the alien may be eligible for adjustment of status to that of a lawful permanent resident pursuant to section 209 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1159, after residing here one year, subject to numerical limitations and the applicable regulations." *Matter of Salim*, 18 I. & N. Dec. 311, 315 (1982). See also *Matter of Lam*, 18 I. & N. Dec. 15, 18 (BIA 1981).
- 7 Article 33.1 of the Convention provides: "No Contracting State shall expel or return ('refouler') a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." 189 U.N.T.S. 150, 176 (1954), 19 U.S.T. 6259, 6278, T.I.A.S. No. 6577 (1968).
- 8 While the Protocol constrained the Attorney General with respect to § 243(h) between 1968 and 1980, the Protocol does not *require* the granting of asylum to anyone, and hence does not subject the Attorney General to a similar constraint with respect to his discretion under § 208(a). See *infra*, at 1218.
- 9 As amended, the new § 243(h) provides: "The Attorney General *shall not* deport or return any alien ... to a country if the Attorney General determines that such alien's life or freedom would be threatened in such country on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." 8 U.S.C. § 1253(h)(1) (emphasis added).
- 10 "The section literally provides for withholding of deportation only if the alien's life or freedom 'would' be threatened in the country to which he would be deported; it does not require withholding if the alien 'might' or 'could' be subject to persecution." *Stevic*, 467 U.S., at 422, 104 S.Ct., at 2497.

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- 11 The BIA agrees that the term "fear," as used in this statute, refers to "a subjective condition, an emotion characterized by the anticipation or awareness of danger." *Matter of Acosta*, Interim Decision No. 2986, p. 14 (Mar. 1, 1985) (citing Webster's Third New International Dictionary 831 (16th ed. 1971)).
- 12 As we have explained, the plain language of this statute appears to settle the question before us. Therefore, we look to the legislative history to determine only whether there is "clearly expressed legislative intention" contrary to that language, which would require us to question the strong presumption that Congress expresses its intent through the language it chooses. See *United States v. James*, 478 U.S. 597, 606, 106 S.Ct. 3116, 3121, 92 L.Ed.2d 483 (1986); *Consumer Product Safety Comm'n v. GTE Sylvania, Inc.*, 447 U.S. 102, 108, 100 S.Ct. 2051, 2056, 64 L.Ed.2d 766 (1980). In this case, far from causing us to question the conclusion that flows from the statutory language, the legislative history adds compelling support to our holding that Congress never intended to restrict eligibility for asylum to aliens who can satisfy § 243(h)'s strict, objective standard.
- 13 The definition also applies to § 209, 8 U.S.C. § 1159, which governs the adjustment of status of refugees after they have been granted asylum.
- 14 Such a procedure had been authorized by regulation since 1974, see 8 CFR pt. 108 (1976), but it was administered by INS District Directors rather than the BIA. As we noted in *Stevic*, these "regulations did not explicitly adopt a standard for the exercise of discretion on the application, but did provide that a denial of an asylum application 'shall not preclude the alien, in a subsequent expulsion hearing, from applying for the benefits of section 243(h) of the Act and of Articles 32 and 33 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.' 8 CFR § 108.2 (1976)." 467 U.S., at 420, n. 13, 104 S.Ct., at 2496, n. 13. In 1979, the regulations were amended to confer jurisdiction over asylum requests on the BIA for the first time. *Ibid*.
- 15 See also *Matter of Janus and Janek*, 12 I. & N. Dec. 866, 876 (BIA 1968). On the District Director level, where § 203(a)(7) claims were generally processed, see n. 14, *supra*, this distinction was also recognized. In *Matter of Ugricic*, 14 I. & N. Dec. 384 (1972), a District Director articulated the test under § 203(a)(7) as whether the applicant could prove that "he was persecuted or had good reason to fear persecution." *Id.*, at 385-386.
- 16 See S.Rep. No. 96-256, p. 9 (1979), U.S.Code Cong. & Admin.News 1980, p. 141 (hereafter S.Rep.) (substantive standard for asylum is not changed); H.R.Rep. No. 96-608, p. 9 (1979) (hereafter H.R.Rep.) (discussing geographic limitations); Hearings before the House Subcommittee on International Operations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on H.R. 2816, 96th Cong., 1st Sess., 72 (1979) (remarks of David Martin).
- 17 The INS argues that Congress intended to perpetuate the standard being used in the informal parole proceedings under the regulations, see n. 14, *supra*, not the asylum procedure under § 203(a)(7). Until 1979 the regulations provided no standard, but they were amended in 1979 to provide that the applicant has the "burden of satisfying the immigration judge that he would be subject to persecution." 8 CFR § 108.3(a) (1980). This standard was identical to the one that was set forth in the regulations for the treatment of applications for withholding of deportation. See 8 CFR § 242.17(c) (1980).
The argument that Congress intended to adhere to the standard used in the informal parole proceedings cannot be squared with Congress' use of an entirely different formulation of the standard for defining "refugee"—one much closer to § 203(a)(7), than to § 243(h) (the statute which was the focus of the standard developed in the 1980 regulations). Moreover, to the extent that Congress was ambiguous as to which practice it sought to incorporate, it is far more reasonable to conclude that it sought to continue the practice under § 203(a)(7), a statutory provision, than to adhere to the informal parole practices of the Attorney General, a matter in which Congress had no involvement. The Government relies on the following passage from the Senate Report to support its contention that Congress sought to incorporate the standard from the parole proceedings—not from § 203(a)(7):
"[T]he bill establishes an asylum provision in the Immigration and Nationality Act for the first time by improving and clarifying the procedures for determining asylum claims filed by aliens who are physically present in the United States. The substantive standard is not changed." S.Rep., at 9, U.S.Code Cong. & Admin.News 1980, p. 149.
The bill that the Senate Committee was discussing indeed made no change in the standards to be applied to applications for asylum from aliens within the United States; the Senate version explicitly incorporated the same standard as used in § 243(h). See *infra*, at 1218. But the Senate version was rejected by Congress, and the well-founded fear standard that was adopted mirrored § 203(a)(7), not § 243(h).

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Justice POWELL's claim that the House Report also sought to incorporate the informal asylum standard is unfounded. *Post*, at 1228–1229. As the passage he quotes and the context plainly indicate, the House Report referred to "means of entry"—an issue dealt with under § 203(a)(7), not the asylum regulations. See H.R.Rep., at 10. The Committee's reference to the Attorney General's asylum procedures, seven pages later in the text, in a discussion labeled "Asylum," and not even dealing with the definition of "well-founded fear," see *id.*, at 17, certainly does nothing to support Justice POWELL's conclusion.

- 18 Although this evidence concerns application of the term "refugee" to § 207, not § 208, the term is defined in § 101(a)(42), and obviously can have only one meaning. Justice POWELL suggests that the definition of "well-founded fear" be interpreted as incorporating the standard from the asylum regulations, rather than the standard from § 203(a)(7), because "[i]t is more natural to speak of 'preserving' an interpretation that had governed the *same* form of relief than one that had applied to a *different* form of relief," *post*, at 1229 (emphasis added). Since the definition in § 101(a)(42) applies to all asylum relief—that corresponding to the old § 203(a)(7) as well as that corresponding to the old Attorney General regulations—it is difficult to understand how Justice POWELL reasons that it is likely that Congress preserved the "*same* form of relief" (emphasis added). The question is: the "*same*" as which? Our answer, based on Congress' choice of language and the legislative history, is that Congress sought to incorporate the "*same*" standard as that used in § 203(a)(7).
- 19 See H.R.Conf.Rep. No. 96–781, p. 19 (1980), U.S.Code Cong. & Admin.News 1980, p. 160; H.R.Rep., at 9; S.Rep., at 4.
- 20 In the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, 62 Stat. 1009 §§ 2(a), (d), Congress adopted the IRO definition of the term "refugee" and thus used the "fear of persecution" standard. This standard was retained in the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, 67 Stat. 400 § 2(a), as well as in the Refugee Escapee Act of 1957, 71 Stat. 643 § 15(c)(1). In 1965, when Congress enacted § 203(a)(7) of the Act, it again used the "fear of persecution" standard.
The interpretation afforded to the IRO definition is important in understanding the United Nations' definition since the Committee drafting the United Nations' definition made it clear that it sought to "assure that the new consolidated convention should afford at least as much protection to refugees as had been provided by previous agreements." United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Statelessness and Related Problems 37 (Feb. 17, 1950) (U.N.Doc. E/1618, E/AC.32/5 (hereafter U.N.Rep.)). In its Manual for Eligibility Officers, the IRO had stated:
"Fear of persecution is to be regarded as a valid objection whenever an applicant can make plausible that owing to his religious or political convictions or to his race, he is afraid of discrimination, or persecution, on returning home. Reasonable grounds are to be understood as meaning that the applicant can give a plausible and coherent account of why he fears persecution." International Refugee Organization, Manual for Eligibility Officers, No. 175, ch. IV, Annex 1, Pt. 1, § C19, p. 24 (undated, circulated in 1950).
- 21 Although the United States has never been party to the 1951 Convention, it is a party to the Protocol, which incorporates the Convention's definition in relevant part. See 19 U.S.T. 6225, T.I.A.S. No. 6577 (1968).
- 22 We do not suggest, of course, that the explanation in the U.N. Handbook has the force of law or in any way binds the INS with reference to the asylum provisions of § 208(a). Indeed, the Handbook itself disclaims such force, explaining that "the determination of refugee status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol ... is incumbent upon the Contracting State in whose territory the refugee finds himself." Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status 1 (ii) (Geneva, 1979).
Nonetheless, the Handbook provides significant guidance in construing the Protocol, to which Congress sought to conform. It has been widely considered useful in giving content to the obligations that the Protocol establishes. See *McMullen v. INS*, 658 F.2d 1312, 1319 (CA9 1981); *Matter of Frentescu*, 18 I. & N. Dec. 244 (BIA 1982); *Matter of Rodriguez-Palma*, 17 I. & N. Dec. 465 (BIA 1980).
- 23 The Board's decision in *Matter of Dunar*, 14 I. & N. Dec. 310 (1973), is not particularly probative of what the Protocol means and how it interacts with the provisions of the 1980 Act. In *Dunar*, the Board was faced with the question whether the United States' accession to the Protocol modified the standard of proof to be applied under § 243(h). The Board, after elaborating on the principle that treaties are not lightly to be read as superseding prior Acts of Congress, *id.*, at 313–314, found no evidence that Congress sought to modify the § 243(h) standard, and therefore construed the provisions as not inherently inconsistent. Even so, the Board recognized some tension between the standards, but was

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satisfied that they could "be reconciled on a case-by-case consideration as they arise." *Id.*, at 321.

Whether or not the Board was correct in *Dunar*, its holding based on a presumption that the two provisions were consistent says little about how the Protocol should be interpreted absent such a presumption, and given Congress' amendment of the statute to make it conform with the Protocol. See *Carvajal-Munoz*, 743 F.2d, at 574 (distinguishing pre-1980 "prediction" about the relation of the standards with post-1980 analysis of Congress' actual intent).

- 24 See 1 A. Grahl-Madsen, *The Status of Refugees in International Law* 181 (1966) ("if there is a real chance that he will suffer persecution, that is reason good enough, and his 'fear' is 'well-founded' "); G. Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law* 22-24 (1983) (balance of probability test is inappropriate; more appropriate test is "reasonable chance," "substantial grounds for thinking," or "serious possibility"); see generally Cox, "Well-Founded Fear of Being Persecuted": The Sources and Application of a Criterion of Refugee Status, 10 *Brooklyn J. Int'l Law* 333 (1984).
- 25 The 1980 Act made withholding of deportation under § 243(h) mandatory in order to comply with Article 33.1. See *supra*, at 1211-1212.
- 26 Section 207(b)(1) of the Senate bill provided: "The Attorney General shall establish a uniform procedure for an alien physically present in the United States, irrespective of his status, to apply for asylum, and the alien shall be granted asylum if he is a refugee within the meaning of section 101(a)(42)(A) and his deportation or return would be prohibited under section 243(h) of this Act." See S.Rep., at 26.
- 27 The 1980 Act was the culmination of a decade of legislative proposals for reform in the refugee laws. See generally Anker & Posner, *The Forty Year Crisis: A Legislative History of the Refugee Act of 1980*, 19 *San Diego L.Rev.* 9, 20-64 (1981). On a number of occasions during that period, the Government objected to the "well-founded fear" standard, arguing: "[I]t should be limited by providing that it be a 'well-founded fear in the opinion of the Attorney General.' Failure to add 'in the opinion of the Attorney General' would make it extremely difficult to administer this section since it would be entirely subjective." Western Hemisphere Immigration, Hearings on H.R. 981 before Subcommittee No. 1 of the Committee on the Judiciary, 93d Cong., 1st Sess., 95 (1973) (statement of Hon. Francis Kellogg, Special Assistant to the Secretary of State). See also Anker & Posner, *supra*, at 25; Helton, *Political Asylum Under the 1980 Refugee Act: An Unfulfilled Promise*, 10 *Mich.J.L. Ref.* 243, 249-252 (1984). In light of this kind of testimony and attention to the issue, it is unrealistic to suggest that Congress did not realize that the "well-founded fear" standard was significantly different from the standard that has continuously been part of § 243(h).
- 28 There are certain exceptions, not relevant here. See, e.g., § 243(h)(2)(A) (alien himself participated in "the persecution of any person ..."); § 243(h)(2)(B) (alien was convicted of "serious crime" and "constitutes a danger to the community of the United States").
- 29 In view of the INS's heavy reliance on the principle of deference as described in *Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837, 104 S.Ct. 2778, 81 L.Ed.2d 694 (1984), we set forth the relevant text in its entirety:
"When a court reviews an agency's construction of the statute which it administers, it is confronted with two questions. First, always, is the question whether Congress has directly spoken to the precise question at issue. If the intent of Congress is clear, that is the end of the matter; for the court, as well as the agency, must give effect to the unambiguously expressed intent of Congress. If, however, the court determines Congress has not directly addressed the precise question at issue, the court does not simply impose its own construction on the statute, as would be necessary in the absence of an administrative interpretation. Rather, if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.
"The power of an administrative agency to administer a congressionally created ... program necessarily requires the formulation of policy and the making of rules to fill any gap left, implicitly or explicitly, by Congress." *Morton v. Ruiz*, 415 U.S. 199, 231, 94 S.Ct. 1055, 1072, 39 L.Ed.2d 270 (1974). If Congress has explicitly left a gap for the agency to fill, there is an express delegation of authority to the agency to elucidate a specific provision of the statute by regulation. Such legislative regulations are given controlling weight unless they are arbitrary, capricious, or manifestly contrary to the statute. Sometimes the legislative delegation to an agency on a particular question is implicit rather than explicit. In such a case, a court may not substitute its own construction of a statutory provision for a reasonable interpretation made by the administrator of an agency.
"We have long recognized that considerable weight should be accorded to an executive department's construction of

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a statutory scheme it is entrusted to administer, and the principle of deference to administrative interpretations

" 'has been consistently followed by this Court whenever decision as to the meaning or reach of a statute has involved reconciling conflicting policies, and a full understanding of the force of the statutory policy in the given situation has depended upon more than ordinary knowledge respecting the matters subjected to agency regulations....

" '... If this choice represents a reasonable accommodation of conflicting policies that were committed to the agency's care by the statute, we should not disturb it unless it appears from the statute or its legislative history that the accommodation is not one that Congress would have sanctioned.' *United States v. Shimer*, 367 U.S. 374, 382, 383 [81 S.Ct. 1554, 1560, 1561, 6 L.Ed.2d 908] (1961)."

"Accord, *Capital Cities Cable, Inc. v. Crisp*, [467 U.S. 691, 699–700, 104 S.Ct. 2694, 2700–2701, 81 L.Ed.2d 580 (1984)].

"In light of these well-settled principles it is clear that the Court of Appeals misconceived the nature of its role in reviewing the regulations at issue. Once it determined, after its own examination of the legislation, that Congress did not actually have an intent regarding the applicability of the bubble concept to the permit program, the question before it was not whether in its view the concept is 'inappropriate' in the general context of a program designed to improve air quality, but whether the Administrator's view that it is appropriate in the context of this particular program is a reasonable one. Based on the examination of the legislation and its history which follows, we agree with the Court of Appeals that Congress did not have a specific intention on the applicability of the bubble concept in these cases, and conclude that the EPA's use of that concept here is a reasonable policy choice for the agency to make." *Id.*, at 842–845, 104 S.Ct., at 2781–2783 (citations and footnotes omitted).

30

An additional reason for rejecting the INS's request for heightened deference to its position is the inconsistency of the positions the BIA has taken through the years. An agency interpretation of a relevant provision which conflicts with the agency's earlier interpretation is "entitled to considerably less deference" than a consistently held agency view. *Watt v. Alaska*, 451 U.S. 259, 273, 101 S.Ct. 1673, 1681, 68 L.Ed.2d 80 (1981); see also *General Electric Co. v. Gilbert*, 429 U.S. 125, 143, 97 S.Ct. 401, 411–412, 50 L.Ed.2d 343 (1976).

The BIA has answered the question of the relationship between the objective § 243(h) standard and the fear-based standard of §§ 203(a)(7), 208, and the United Nations Protocol in at least three different ways. During the period between 1965, when § 203(a)(7) was enacted, and 1972, the BIA expressly recognized that § 203(a)(7) and § 243(h) prescribed different standards. See *supra*, at 1213–1214. Moreover, although the BIA decided in 1973 that the two standards were not irreconcilably different, see *Matter of Dunar*, 14 I. & N. Dec. 310 (1973), as of 1981 the INS was still instructing its officials to apply a "good reason" test to requests for asylum from aliens not within the United States. See Dept. of Justice, INS Operating Instructions Regulations TM 101, § 208.4, p. 766.9 (Nov. 11, 1981) (explaining that "well-founded fear" is satisfied if applicant "can show good reason why he/she fears persecution"). In 1984, when this case was decided by the BIA, it adhered to the view that the INS now espouses—complete identity of the standards. In 1985, however, the BIA decided to reevaluate its position and issued a comprehensive opinion to explain its latest understanding of the "well-founded fear" standard. *Matter of Acosta*, Interim Decision No. 2986 (Mar. 1, 1985).

In *Acosta*, the BIA noted a number of similarities between the two standards and concluded that in practical application they are "comparable" or "essentially comparable," and that the differences between them are not "meaningful," but the agency never stated that they are identical, equivalent, or interchangeable. On the contrary, the *Acosta* opinion itself establishes that the two standards differ. In describing the objective component of the asylum standard, the BIA concluded that the alien is not required to establish the likelihood of persecution to any "particular degree of certainty." *Id.*, at 22. There must be a "real chance" that the alien will become a victim of persecution, *ibid.*, but it is not necessary to show "that persecution 'is more likely than not' to occur." *Id.*, at 25. The *Acosta* opinion was written after we had decided in *Stevic* that the § 243(h) standard "requires that an application be supported by evidence establishing that it is more likely than not that the alien would be subject to persecution," 467 U.S., at 429–430, 104 S.Ct., at 2501. The decision in *Acosta* and the long pattern of erratic treatment of this issue make it apparent that the BIA has not consistently agreed, and even today does not completely agree, with the INS's litigation position that the two standards are equivalent.

31

How "meaningful" the differences between the two standards may be is a question that cannot be fully decided in the abstract, but the fact that Congress has prescribed two different standards in the same Act certainly implies that it intended them to have significantly different meanings.

We cannot accept the INS's argument that it is impossible to think about a "well-founded fear" except in "more likely than not" terms. The Board was able to do it for a long time under § 203(a)(7), see *Matter of Tan*, 12 I. & N. Dec. 564

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(1967); *Matter of Adamska*, 12 I. & N. Dec. 201 (1967), and has apparently had little trouble applying the two separate standards in compliance with the recent Courts of Appeals' decisions. See, e.g., *Matter of Sanchez and Escobar*, Interim Decision No. 2996 (Oct. 15, 1985).

- 32 Justice POWELL argues that the Court of Appeals should be reversed for a different reason—that it misinterpreted the BIA's decision. See *post*, at 1213–1216. This issue was not raised in any of the parties' briefs, and was neither "set forth" nor "fairly included" within the question presented in the petition for certiorari. See this Court's Rule 20.1. The question presented asked:

"Whether an alien's burden of proving eligibility for asylum pursuant to Section 208(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, 8 U.S.C. 1158(a), is equivalent to his burden of proving eligibility for withholding of deportation pursuant to Section 243(h) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. 1253(h)." Pet. for Cert. (l).

This question cannot be read as challenging the Court of Appeals' determination that the BIA in fact required respondent "to demonstrate a clear probability of persecution in order to be declared eligible for asylum." 767 F.2d, at 1454. We therefore decline to address the issue. See *United Parcel Service, Inc. v. Mitchell*, 451 U.S. 56, 60, n. 2, 101 S.Ct. 1559, 1562–1563, n. 2, 67 L.Ed.2d 732 (1981); *Irvine v. California*, 347 U.S. 128, 129, 74 S.Ct. 381, 98 L.Ed. 561 (1954).

See, e.g., *Carcamo-Flores v. INS*, 805 F.2d 60, 68 (CA2 1986) ("What is relevant is the fear a reasonable person would have, keeping in mind the context of a reasonable person who is facing the possibility of persecution, perhaps including a loss of freedom or even, in some cases, the loss of life"); *Guevara-Flores v. INS*, 786 F.2d 1242, 1249 (CA5 1986), cert. pending, No. 86–388 ("An alien possesses a well-founded fear of persecution if a reasonable person in her circumstances would fear persecution if she were to be returned to her native country"); *Cardoza-Fonseca v. INS*, 767 F.2d 1448, 1452–1453 (CA9 1985) (case below) ("In contrast, the term 'well-founded fear' requires that (1) the alien have a subjective fear, and (2) that this fear have enough of a basis that it can be considered well-founded"); *Carvajal-Munoz v. INS*, 743 F.2d 562, 574 (CA7 1984) ("The applicant must present *specific* facts establishing that he or she has actually been the victim of persecution or has some other good reason to fear that he or she will be *singled out* for persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion") (emphasis in original).

- 1 The Court suggests that the BIA's interpretation of the "well-founded fear" standard has been "erratic." *Ante*, at 1222, n. 29. An examination of the *relevant* BIA decisions leads to a contrary conclusion. The BIA first addressed the standard in *Matter of Dunar*, 14 I. & N. Dec. 310 (1973). In that case, the BIA considered the meaning of the term "well-founded fear" in the United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Jan. 31, 1967, 19 U.S.T. 6223, 6225, T.I.A.S. No. 6577 (1968). When Congress inserted this language in the asylum provisions of the Act in 1980, the BIA interpreted the language to mean exactly the same thing as the language in the Protocol. *Matter of Acosta*, Interim Decision No. 2986 (Mar. 1, 1985). Thus, the BIA's position has never changed. The Court bases its characterization of the BIA's record on decisions applying the more lenient "fear" standard. If anything about these statutes is clear, it is that a "well-founded fear" is something more than a "fear." It is unfair to characterize the BIA's decisions as "erratic" when the agency was in fact interpreting two different standards.
- 2 The BIA has interpreted the statutory definition to require proof of four elements: (i) the alien must have a "fear" of "persecution"; (ii) the fear must be "well-founded"; (iii) the persecution must be "on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion"; and (iv) the alien must be unable or unwilling to return to his homeland because of persecution or his well-founded fear of persecution. See *id.*, at 11.
- 3 Of course, the applicant would have to meet all four elements of the well-founded fear standards. See *supra*, at 3 (quoting *Acosta*, Interim Decision No. 2986, at 22). Although these requirements restrict grants of relief in some cases, none of them rests on the mathematical considerations that the Court suggests govern current BIA practice. Moreover, the Court's exegesis of the "plain meaning" of the phrase "well-founded" in no way suggests that the BIA's four-part test is a misinterpretation of the statute.
- 4 Those regulations constituted this country's informal attempt to comply with the exhortation of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to "facilitate the assimilation and naturalization," Art. 34, Jan. 31, 1967, [1968] 19 U.S.T. 6259, 6276, T.I.A.S. No. 6577, of persons who have a "well-founded fear of being persecuted," Art. 1(A)(2), *id.*, at 6261. All parties agree that the Convention's language was the ultimate source of the language Congress placed in the Act.

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- 5 The Court concludes that the Senate Report has no probative force because the Conference Committee adopted the House language rather than the Senate language. But the changes in language made by the Conference Committee do not help the Court's position. As I explain *infra* this page, the House Report indicates that the House Bill also was intended to adopt the standards set forth in the regulations. Moreover, there is no suggestion in the Conference Report that this change in language affected the substantive standard. See *infra*, at 1230.
- 6 This interpretation is supported by evidence that the House bill, like the Senate bill, was intended to preserve the Attorney General's regulations treating the two standards as substantially identical. See *supra*, at 1229.
- 7 The Court contends that this question is not before us. *Ante*, at 1221, n. 31. I find this suggestion quite strange. The Immigration and Naturalization Service asked the Court to determine "[w]hether an alien's burden of proving eligibility for asylum ... is equivalent to his burden of proving eligibility for withholding of deportation." Pet. for Cert. (l). The question whether the two standards are equivalent "fairly includes," under this Court's Rule 21.1(a), the problem of defining the appropriate standard for asylum. And that question can only be answered on the facts of this case. The Court does not sit to answer hypothetical questions of statutory construction. Normally we resolve such questions only by examining the facts of the case before us. In this case, the Court affirms the Court of Appeals' decision that the BIA required an intolerably high burden of proof in this case. Yet, like the Court of Appeals, the Court examines neither the facts of the case before us nor the legal standard the BIA applied. In my view, Rule 21 does not contemplate this result.
- 8 In terms of the four-element *Acosta* test for well-founded fear, respondent's claim would have failed both the first and the second elements. Respondent failed to show either that she "possesses a belief or characteristic the persecutor seeks to overcome" or that "the persecutor is already aware, or could easily become aware, that [she] possesses this belief or characteristic." *Acosta*, Interim Decision No. 2986, at 22.

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8 C.F.R. § 1208.13 Establishing asylum eligibility.

(a) Burden of proof. The burden of proof is on the applicant for asylum to establish that he or she is a refugee as defined in section 101(a)(42) of the Act. The testimony of the applicant, if credible, may be sufficient to sustain the burden of proof without corroboration. The fact that the applicant previously established a credible fear of persecution for purposes of section 235(b)(1)(B) of the Act does not relieve the alien of the additional burden of establishing eligibility for asylum.

(b) Eligibility. The applicant may qualify as a refugee either because he or she has suffered past persecution or because he or she has a well-founded fear of future persecution.

(1) Past persecution. An applicant shall be found to be a refugee on the basis of past persecution if the applicant can establish that he or she has suffered persecution in the past in the applicant's country of nationality or, if stateless, in his or her country of last habitual residence, on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and is unable or unwilling to return to, or avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country owing to such persecution. An applicant who has been found to have established such past persecution shall also be presumed to have a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of the original claim. That presumption may be rebutted if an asylum officer or immigration judge makes one of the findings described in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section. If the applicant's fear of future persecution is unrelated to the past persecution, the applicant bears the burden of establishing that the fear is well-founded.

(i) Discretionary referral or denial. Except as provided in paragraph (b)(1)(iii) of this section, an asylum officer shall, in the exercise of his or her discretion, refer or deny, or an immigration judge, in the exercise of his or her discretion, shall deny the asylum application of an alien found to be a refugee on the basis of past persecution if any of the following is found by a preponderance of the evidence:

(A) There has been a fundamental change in circumstances such that the applicant no longer has a well-founded fear of persecution in the applicant's country of nationality or, if stateless, in the applicant's country of last habitual residence, on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; or

(B) The applicant could avoid future persecution by relocating to another part of the applicant's country of nationality or, if stateless, another part of the applicant's country of last habitual residence, and under all the circumstances, it would be reasonable to expect the applicant to do so.

(ii) Burden of proof. In cases in which an applicant has demonstrated past persecution under paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the Service shall bear the burden of establishing by a preponderance of the evidence the requirements of paragraphs (b)(1)(i)(A) or (B) of this section.

(iii) Grant in the absence of well-founded fear of persecution. An applicant described in paragraph (b)(1)(i) of this section who is not barred from a grant of asylum under paragraph (c) of this section, may be granted asylum, in the exercise of the decision-maker's discretion, if:

(A) The applicant has demonstrated compelling reasons for being unwilling or unable to return to the country arising out of the severity of the past persecution; or

(B) The applicant has established that there is a reasonable possibility that he or she may suffer other serious harm upon removal to that country.

(2) Well-founded fear of persecution. (i) An applicant has a well-founded fear of persecution if:

(A) The applicant has a fear of persecution in his or her country of nationality or, if stateless, in his or her country of last habitual residence, on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion;

(B) There is a reasonable possibility of suffering such persecution if he or she were to return to that country; and

(C) He or she is unable or unwilling to return to, or avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of such fear.

(ii) An applicant does not have a well-founded fear of persecution if the applicant could avoid persecution by relocating to another part of the applicant's country of nationality or, if stateless, another part of the applicant's country of last habitual residence, if under all the circumstances it would be reasonable to expect the applicant to do so.

(iii) In evaluating whether the applicant has sustained the burden of proving that he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution, the asylum officer or immigration judge shall not require the applicant to provide evidence that there is a reasonable possibility he or she would be singled out individually for persecution if:

....

(3) Reasonableness of internal relocation. For purposes of determinations under paragraphs (b)(1)(i), (b)(1)(ii), and (b)(2) of this section, adjudicators should consider, but are not limited to considering, whether the applicant would face other serious harm in the place of suggested relocation; any ongoing civil strife within the country; administrative, economic, or judicial infrastructure; geographical limitations; and social and cultural constraints, such as age, gender, health, and social and familial ties. Those factors may, or may not, be relevant, depending on all the circumstances of the case, and are not necessarily determinative of whether it would be reasonable for the applicant to relocate.

(i) In cases in which the applicant has not established past persecution, the applicant shall bear the burden of establishing that it would not be reasonable for him or her to relocate, unless the persecution is by a government or is government-sponsored.

(ii) In cases in which the persecutor is a government or is government-sponsored, or the applicant has established persecution in the past, it shall be presumed that internal relocation would not be reasonable, unless the Service establishes by a preponderance of the evidence that, under all the circumstances, it would be reasonable for the applicant to relocate.

....

Matter of Pula, 19 I. & N. Dec. 467 (1987)

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Superseded by Statute as Stated in U.S. v. Kantengwa, 1st Cir.(Mass.), March 25, 2015
19 I. & N. Dec. 467 (BIA), Interim Decision 3033, 1987 WL 108948

United States Department of Justice

Board of Immigration Appeals

MATTER OF PULA

In Exclusion Proceedings

A-26873482

Decided by Board September 22, 1987

BY: Milhollan, Chairman; Dunne, Morris, and Vacca, Board Members. Concurring in Part, Dissenting in Part: Heilman, Board Member

In a decision dated December 1, 1986, the immigration judge found the applicant excludable under sections 212(a)(19) and (20) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. §§ 1182(a)(19) and (20) (1982). He granted the applicant's applications for withholding of deportation to Albania and Yugoslavia under section 243(h) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1253(h) (1982), but he denied the applicant's application *468 for asylum under section 208 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1158 (1982), and ordered that the applicant be excluded and deported from the United States. The applicant has appealed from the denial of his application for asylum. The Immigration and Naturalization Service has appealed from the grant of the application for withholding of deportation to Yugoslavia. The applicant's appeal will be sustained, and the Service's appeal will be dismissed.¹

The applicant is a 26-year-old married male native of Albania and citizen of Yugoslavia. He arrived in the United States on June 5, 1986, and was placed in exclusion proceedings. The applicant does not contest on appeal his excludability under sections 212(a)(19) and (20) of the Act. We are satisfied from a review of the record that the applicant received a fair hearing and that his excludability has been clearly established. The only issues to be decided by the present appeal are whether the immigration judge's denial of asylum and grant of withholding of deportation to Yugoslavia were proper.

The applicant testified that he was born in Albania and fled to Yugoslavia with his family as a refugee when he was 5 years old. He said that he left Yugoslavia in 1986 to avoid further encounters with police officials who, on numerous occasions since 1979, had detained, interrogated, and physically abused him for hours or days at a time. He stated that the police insisted that he was involved in the political activities of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia, although he denied the accusation. He said that the police sought information from him about such matters as his contacts with his Albanian family and friends, Albanian anti-government demonstrations, and discussions among local Albanian university students. He also testified that one of the periods of detention occurred in 1982 after he approached Yugoslav authorities to request travel documents to visit his sister in the United States. The applicant explained that the police accused him of planning to go to the United States to participate in anti-Yugoslav demonstrations with Albanians here.

**2 The applicant further advised that in 1985 Yugoslav authorities did issue him a titre de voyage² so he could travel out of the country, but the American Embassy denied his application for a visa. According to the applicant, he was told at the embassy that the titre de voyage did not guarantee his return to Yugoslavia. The applicant *469 testified that he subsequently relinquished his refugee status and reluctantly accepted Yugoslav citizenship in order to qualify for a Yugoslav passport. He said that he left Yugoslavia on April 20, 1986, as soon as he managed to obtain the passport. He stated that he took a train to Brussels, Belgium, although he had made application to Yugoslav authorities only for permission to visit Turkey. He testified that he believed that the authorities would have denied him the passport if they had known that he intended to go to the

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United States. He also said that he was afraid to apply again for a visa at the American Embassy because most of the employees there were Yugoslav nationals who might be agents for the Government of Yugoslavia.

In addition, the applicant testified that he stayed in Brussels for 6 weeks with a man who had been a friend of his family in Albania and Yugoslavia. He said that his friend made a telephone call on his behalf to a refugee organization in Italy to inquire about whether he could obtain residency in an Italian refugee camp. According to the applicant, his friend was informed by the organization that citizens of Yugoslavia were not accepted as refugees in European states. The applicant also said that while he was in Brussels he applied for a tourist visa at the American Embassy, but his application was denied and he was told to go to Yugoslavia to apply for a visa. He testified that he did not ask for asylum at the American Embassy because he did not know that he could do so.

The applicant also stated that one day while he was discussing his situation in an Albanian coffee house in Belgium, a stranger there offered to sell him a titre de voyage for \$1,000. He said that he gave the man his photograph and paid him the money 2 days later, when he returned with a titre de voyage issued by the Government of Belgium which had a tourist visa to the United States already entered. The applicant advised that the titre de voyage had been issued in the name of someone whom he did not know.

The applicant further testified that on June 5, 1986, he flew with his titre de voyage from Belgium to New York. He said that during a 2- to 3-hour stopover at the airport in Amsterdam, he mailed his Yugoslav passport to a cousin in the United States to avoid having it in his possession when he landed in New York. He explained that his inability to speak English made him concerned that immigration officials might discover the passport and put him on a plane to Yugoslavia before he could tell them about his desire for asylum. The applicant also stated that he did not dispose of the Yugoslav passport altogether because he planned to use it later to corroborate his account of events for his asylum request. In addition, the applicant advised that when he arrived in New York, language differences did in fact prevent him and the immigration officer from communicating and, as a result, he did not tell the officer anything or sign any statements.

****3** The applicant also testified that he chose to flee to the United States because he had relatives here. He stated that he had a sister and two uncles who were lawful permanent residents of the United States, and cousins who were United States citizens. He further advised that his wife, who was still living in Yugoslavia with their daughter, also had an uncle and cousins in the United States. The record reflects that many of the applicant's relatives traveled from such places as upstate New York, Texas, and California on multiple occasions to attend the applicant's hearings in New York City.

In his decision, the immigration judge stated that if the facts as described by the applicant were true, they established without a doubt that the applicant had been persecuted in the past and faced a clear probability of persecution in the future. The immigration judge then made a specific finding that the applicant's testimony was credible, noting that he had observed the applicant testify for approximately 8 hours over a period of 2 days. He accordingly found that the applicant had established his eligibility for withholding of deportation to Yugoslavia and Albania. The immigration judge further found, however, that the applicant was not eligible for asylum as a matter of discretion because the equity of his many relatives legally in the United States did not overcome the adverse factor of his having sought admission to the United States by use of a purchased travel document.

On appeal, the Service contends that the applicant has not established his eligibility for asylum or withholding of deportation to Yugoslavia because his testimony is not credible. It is argued that the applicant's persecution claim rests primarily on his own self-serving statements, that discrepancies exist between his testimony and his written asylum application, and that some of the facts to which he testified, such as his receipt of Yugoslav citizenship and a Yugoslav passport, are inconsistent with a clear probability or a well-founded fear of persecution. In addition, the Service maintains that the immigration judge correctly denied asylum in the exercise of discretion because the applicant sought admission to the United States with a false travel document.

The applicant asserts on appeal that there is no basis to disturb the immigration judge's credibility finding, and that he merits asylum on both statutory and discretionary grounds. He contends that the immigration judge gave undue weight to his

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manner of attempted entry in denying asylum in the exercise of discretion. He argues that in Matter of Salim, 18 I&N Dec. 311 (BIA 1982), the *471 Board of Immigration Appeals failed to consider that section 208(a) of the Act is 'entry-blind.' According to the applicant, the phrase 'irrespective of such alien's status' in section 208(a) implies that Congress did not intend for the manner of entry or attempted entry to be relevant in determining eligibility for asylum. He maintains that while manner of entry may be considered as one of many factors in exercising discretion, it should not be used as the primary and overriding basis for denial.

****4** The applicant bears the evidentiary burdens of proof and persuasion in any application for withholding of deportation under section 243(h) or asylum under section 208 of the Act. Matter of Acosta, Interim Decision 2986 (BIA 1985); 8 C.F.R. §§ 208.5, 242.17(c) (1987).

To be eligible for withholding of deportation pursuant to section 243(h) of the Act, an alien's facts must show a clear probability of persecution in the country designated for deportation, on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. INS v. Stevic, 467 U.S. 407 (1984). This means that the alien's facts must establish that it is more likely than not he would be subject to persecution for one of the grounds specified. Id.

To be eligible for asylum under section 208 of the Act, an alien must meet the definition of a 'refugee,' which requires him to show persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in a particular country on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Section 101(a)(42)(A) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(42)(A) (1982); section 208 of the Act. The burden of proof required to establish eligibility for asylum is lower than that required for withholding of deportation. INS v. Cardoza—Fonseca, — U.S. —, 107 S. Ct. 1207 (1987). An applicant for asylum has established a well-founded fear if he shows that a reasonable person in his circumstances would fear persecution for one of the five grounds specified in the Act. Matter of Mogharrabi, Interim Decision 3028 (BIA 1987). Further, asylum, unlike withholding of deportation, may be denied in the exercise of discretion to an alien who establishes statutory eligibility for the relief. INS v. Cardoza—Fonseca, *supra*; Matter of Mogharrabi, *supra*.

We find no merit in the assertion by the Service that the immigration judge erred in assessing the applicant's credibility. The immigration judge found the applicant to be credible after observing his demeanor and listening to his testimony for 8 hours over a period of 2 days. The finding of an immigration judge with respect to the credibility of witnesses appearing before him will ordinarily be given great weight. *472 Wing Ding Chan v. INS, 631 F.2d 978 (D.C. Cir. 1980), *cert. denied*, 450 U.S. 921 (1981); Vasquez—Mondragon v. INS, 560 F.2d 1225 (5th Cir. 1977); Matter of Magana, 17 I&N Dec. 111 (BIA 1979); Matter of Teng, 15 I&N Dec. 516 (BIA 1975); Matter of T—, 7 I&N Dec. 417 (BIA 1957). We have carefully examined the record in this case and conclude that the immigration judge's determination is correct. In view of the detail, consistency, and candor of the applicant's lengthy testimony, we do not find that his credibility is impeached by the minor discrepancies in his written asylum application, which was prepared with the assistance of interpreters.

We further agree with the immigration judge's conclusion that if the applicant's testimony is true, it establishes that the applicant has been persecuted. We have considered the Service's argument that some of the actions of Yugoslav authorities towards the applicant, *i.e.*, granting him citizenship and issuing him a passport, appear inconsistent with an intent to persecute. Yet because the record reflects that those authorities nevertheless have persecuted the applicant, these apparent inconsistencies in treatment provide an insufficient basis, under the facts of this case, for rejecting the applicant's persecution claim. We conclude, therefore, that a reasonable person in the applicant's circumstances would fear persecution if returned to Yugoslavia, and that the applicant has established his statutory eligibility for asylum.

****5** We turn now to the issue of whether the applicant merits asylum in the exercise of discretion. In Matter of Salim, *supra*, we denied asylum as a matter of discretion to an alien who was excludable under section 212(a)(19) of the Act and who attempted to circumvent the orderly procedures provided for refugees to immigrate lawfully. We found the fraudulent avoidance of orderly refugee procedures to be an extremely adverse factor which could only be overcome with the most unusual showing of countervailing equities.

The applicant argues that the decision in Matter of Salim, *supra*, improperly considered the alien's manner of attempted

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entry, because it overlooked language in section 208(a) of the Act, 'irrespective of such alien's status,' which makes the manner of entry irrelevant to eligibility for asylum. We reject the applicant's argument. Section 208(a) of the Act provides: The Attorney General shall establish a procedure for an alien physically present in the United States or at a land border or port of entry, irrespective of such alien's status, to apply for asylum, and the alien may be granted asylum in the discretion of the Attorney General if the Attorney General determines that such alien is a refugee within the meaning of section 101(a)(42)(A).

*473 Section 208(a) consists of only one sentence, which contains two independent clauses linked by the conjunction 'and.' A careful reading of the language of this section reveals that the phrase 'irrespective of such alien's status' modifies only the word 'alien' in the first clause of the sentence. The function of that phrase is to ensure that the procedure established by the Attorney General for asylum applications includes provisions for adjudicating applications from any alien present in the United States or at a land or port of entry, 'irrespective of such alien's status.' Cf. Yiu Sing Chun v. Sava, 708 F.2d 869 (2d Cir. 1983), and Matter of Walde, Interim Decision 2981 (BIA 1984) (discussing whether an alien in the status of a stowaway is entitled under section 208(a) to a hearing before an immigration judge on his application for asylum). The phrase does not apply to the second clause of the sentence, which is independent and separate from the first clause. This second clause contains authorization for the Attorney General to grant asylum applications at his discretion. The only express qualification on the exercise of this discretion is that the alien be a refugee within the meaning of section 101(a)(42)(A). Thus, while section 208(a) provides that an asylum application be accepted from an alien 'irrespective of such alien's status,' no language in that section precludes the consideration of the alien's status in granting or denying the application in the exercise of discretion.

Yet while we find that an alien's manner of entry or attempted entry is a proper and relevant discretionary factor to consider in adjudicating asylum applications, we agree with the applicant that Matter of Salim, *supra*, places too much emphasis on the circumvention of orderly refugee procedures. This circumvention can be a serious adverse factor, but it should not be considered in such a way that the practical effect is to deny relief in virtually all cases. This factor is only one of a number of factors which should be balanced in exercising discretion, and the weight accorded to this factor may vary depending on the facts of a particular case. We therefore withdraw from Matter of Salim insofar as it suggests that the circumvention of orderly refugee procedures alone is sufficient to require the most unusual showing of countervailing equities.

**6 Instead of focusing only on the circumvention of orderly refugee procedures, the totality of the circumstances and actions of an alien in his flight from the country where he fears persecution should be examined in determining whether a favorable exercise of discretion is warranted. Among those factors which should be considered are whether the alien passed through any other countries or arrived in the United States directly from his country, whether orderly refugee procedures were in fact available to help him in *474 any country he passed through, and whether he made any attempts to seek asylum before coming to the United States. In addition, the length of time the alien remained in a third country, and his living conditions, safety, and potential for long-term residency there are also relevant. For example, an alien who is forced to remain in hiding to elude persecutors, or who faces imminent deportation back to the country where he fears persecution, may not have found a safe haven even though he has escaped to another country. Further, whether the alien has relatives legally in the United States or other personal ties to this country which motivated him to seek asylum here rather than elsewhere is another factor to consider. In this regard, the extent of the alien's ties to any other countries where he does not fear persecution should also be examined. Moreover, if the alien engaged in fraud to circumvent orderly refugee procedures, the seriousness of the fraud should be considered. The use of fraudulent documents to escape the country of persecution itself is not a significant adverse factor while, at the other extreme, entry under the assumed identity of a United States citizen with a United States passport, which was fraudulently obtained by the alien from the United States Government; is very serious fraud.

In addition to the circumstances and actions of the alien in his flight from the country where he fears persecution, general humanitarian considerations, such as an alien's tender age or poor health, may also be relevant in a discretionary determination. A situation of particular concern involves an alien who has established his statutory eligibility for asylum but cannot meet the higher burden required for withholding of deportation. Deportation to a country where the alien may be persecuted thus becomes a strong possibility. In such a case, the discretionary factors should be carefully evaluated in light of

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the unusually harsh consequences which may befall an alien who has established a well-founded fear of persecution; the danger of persecution should generally outweigh all but the most egregious of adverse factors.

Each of the factors mentioned above will not, of course, be found in every case. An applicant for asylum has the burden of establishing that the favorable exercise of discretion is warranted. Matter of Shirdel, Interim Decision 2958 (BIA 1984). Therefore, the alien should present evidence on any relevant factors which he believes support the favorable exercise of discretion in his case. In the absence of any adverse factors, however, asylum should be granted in the exercise of discretion.

****7** In the case before us, the applicant attempted to enter the United States with a fraudulent document. Yet we note that the ***475** applicant had inquired about obtaining refugee status in Europe, only to be informed that the Yugoslav citizenship which he had recently accepted presented an obstacle to his being recognized by European countries as a refugee. Further, the record reflects that the applicant resorted to the purchase of the fraudulent document only after he was unsuccessful in several attempts at acquiring a visa to enter the United States legally to ask for asylum. We find no basis for doubting the applicant's testimony that he failed to request asylum at the American Embassy because he did not know that he could do so. In addition, the applicant remained in Belgium for only 6 weeks and was in the Netherlands for only a few hours; it does not appear that he was entitled to remain permanently in either country. Moreover, he decided to seek asylum in the United States because he had many relatives legally in the United States to whom he could turn for assistance. Although only the applicant's sister would typically be characterized as a 'close' relative, the record reflects that many of his other relatives are also particularly supportive and concerned about him. We note that the applicant seems to have no significant ties to any other countries except for Albania and Yugoslavia, where he fears persecution. Based on the foregoing factors, therefore, we find that asylum should be granted in the exercise of discretion. We further find it unnecessary to decide whether the applicant has also established a clear probability of persecution in Yugoslavia for the purpose of section 243(h) of the Act. See Matter of Mogharrabi, supra.

Accordingly, the applicant's appeal will be sustained and the Service's appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The applicant's appeal is sustained and the Service's appeal is dismissed.

FURTHER ORDER: The applicant is granted asylum pursuant to section 208 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, and the exclusion proceedings are terminated.

CONCURRING IN PART AND DISSENTING IN PART: Michael J. Heilman Board Member

In my view, this decision is headed in the right direction, the rejection of the unfortunate series of decisions starting with Matter of Salim, 18 I&N Dec. 311 (BIA 1982), in which so much emphasis was based on 'circumvention' of the overseas refugee process, and on the manner of entry or attempted entry into the United States. These decisions were unfortunate because they betrayed a basic misunderstanding of the nature of the overseas refugee program ***476** and most essentially, the criteria a person had to meet to even be considered for the program, much less to qualify.

Equally as important, those decisions disregarded the clear language and clear purpose of section 208 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1158. The majority in this decision continues to disregard that language and purpose. Specifically, the phrase 'irrespective of such alien's status' is interpreted by the majority as governing the procedures used to adjudicate asylum applications. I do not follow the logic of this approach. If the purpose of the phrase is as described by the majority, then it is simply surplus, as it adds nothing grammatically to that subsection, which could just as well read a 'procedure for an alien physically present in the United States or at a land border or port of entry, to apply for asylum.'

****8** In my estimation, that subsection makes more sense if that phrase is read to describe the alien, not the procedure for adjudicating the asylum claim. This is so for two reasons. The first is the fact that there have been different procedures for different aliens to apply for asylum depending on their status and other factors. If this language required a single procedure, then it has never been implemented in that manner.

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Secondly, the purpose of the asylum provision would be better served by abandoning the fixation with the manner in which the asylum applicant has arrived in the United States or at a port of entry. The asylum provisions are humanitarian in their essence and indeed recognize that the forces which impel persons to seek refuge may be so overwhelming that the 'normal' immigration laws cannot be applied in their usual manner. This fact was recognized in the United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,¹ the international agreement which the asylum provisions implement. Not only did the Convention recognize the abnormal situations which give rise to refugee flows, it specifically forbade its signatories in Article 31 from penalizing a person who violated a signatory's borders, if the person presented himself promptly after arrival. Since the United States is a signatory to the Protocol, and purports to apply the asylum and refugee laws consistently with that agreement, there seems little justification for the approach taken by the majority.

*477 While I concur with the conclusion reached in this appeal, I do not join that part of the decision which interprets the phrase 'irrespective of such alien's status.' Asylum should be denied in the exercise of discretion only in exceptional circumstances.

Footnotes

- ¹ This decision was originally entered on August 6, 1987. We have reopened on our own motion for the limited purpose of incorporating revisions for publication.
- ² A titre de voyage is a travel document issued in lieu of a passport under provisions of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, July 28, 1951, 189 U.N.T.S. 150.
- ¹ United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, July 28, 1951, 189 U.N.T.S. 150; United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, Jan. 31, 1967, [1968] 19 U.S.T. 6223, T.I.A.S. No. 6577, 606 U.N.T.S. 268.

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