



Feds: Domestic violence victims may get asylum

By PAUL ELIAS (AP) – 4 days ago

SAN FRANCISCO — The Department of Homeland Security has opened the door to the possibility that immigrants who have been victims of domestic violence could qualify for asylum.

The move, a change from the Bush administration, came to light when the government asked that the case of a Mexican woman who claims she was severely beaten by her common-law husband be sent back to an immigration court for further review.

Department of Homeland Security spokesman Matthew Chandler said Wednesday the agency "continues to view domestic violence as a possible basis for asylum in the United States."

The woman's bid for asylum was turned down by an immigration judge in San Francisco a few years ago, and she appealed to the Board of Immigration Appeals in Arlington, Va. The department urged that the case get further review, saying that in some cases, but not all, foreign domestic violence victims could be granted asylum.

Chandler said asylum claims based on domestic violence claims are "highly complex, and we are interested in developing regulations that will address these cases."

Karen Musalo, the woman's lawyer, made the confidential department filing available Wednesday to highlight what she said is a "very new, very significant" policy change between the Bush administration and the Obama administration.

Musalo's client, who is not identified in the court document, arrived in the United States from Mexico in 2004 with her two children. She claimed the father of the children abused her in Mexico and applied for asylum in America.

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