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No Contrast More Stark

By Daniel M. Kowalski\*

There is fact-based reality, as known by one man, his family, thousands of supporters, and a federal judge.

And then there is fear-driven fantasy, as promoted by the Department of Homeland Security.

The case of Ibrahim Parlak presents the starkest contrast between these two worlds.

Parlak is a refugee from Turkey. Our government granted him asylum in 1992, and later a "green card." He owns and operates a restaurant midway between Chicago and Kalamazoo.

Parlak even applied for U.S. citizenship, in 1998, but three years later Immigration denied the application, and initiated deportation proceedings in 2002.

Until then Parlak had been living a happy, if unremarkable life in the United States, far from where he was tortured by the Turkish government. But on July 29, 2004 agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE,") a branch of the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS,") took Parlak into custody, alleging he is a terrorist.

The terrorism charge is based on Parlak's pro-Kurdish activities in Turkey in 1988, for which the Turkish government imprisoned and tortured him - and for which we granted him asylum in the United States. (Turkey convicted Parlak of "separatist activities" and stripped him of his Turkish citizenship and passport.)

Parlak's story has been on Ted Koppel's ABC News "Nightline," on NPR, and in the New York Times Sunday Magazine. His supporters have set up a website - [www.freeibrahim.com](http://www.freeibrahim.com) - containing all the news clips and legal documents.

In ordering him released from custody (ICE maintains that, as a terrorist, Parlak is subject to "mandatory detention" without bond) federal judge Avern Cohn said, "[Parlak] has lived an exemplary life in the United States, ... has strong family and community ties and support ... appeared for all scheduled immigration proceedings for the nearly two years since he was placed in removal proceedings prior to being taken into custody; ... is essentially stateless - he has no passport, citizenship, or travel papers and has no place to go other than back to his family and community in Harbert, Michigan. In sum, [Parlak] is a lawful permanent resident of the United States. He has been a model immigrant

vigorously asserting his right to remain in the United States. He is not a threat to anyone nor a risk of flight. He has strong ties to the community in which he resides."

Those are the facts.

ICE, however, continues to peddle its fear-based fantasy. In a statement released June 3, ICE repeatedly called Parlak a terrorist and stated it will continue to press its case for deportation - even though, given his stateless status, Parlak can't be deported back to Turkey or anywhere else.

Maybe, in the DHS fantasy world, Parlak could be put on a plane to circle the globe, endlessly. A former refugee, in orbit.

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