

July 15, 2020

Submitted via <https://www.regulations.gov>

Lauren Alder Reid, Assistant Director
Office of Policy
Executive Office for Immigration Review
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 1800
Falls Church, VA 22041

RE: Comments in Opposition to United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) (the Departments) Joint Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Rule): Procedures for Asylum and Withholding of Removal; Credible Fear and Reasonable Fear Review; [RIN 1615-AC42 / 1125-AA94](#) / EOIR Docket No. 18-0002 / A.G. Order No. 4714-2020

I came to the United States from Honduras because I wanted to escape my ex-husband. I had married a man who I thought was what he seemed, but he wasn't, he was two-faced. When we got married, the situation worsened. I experienced years of severe sexual and physical abuse at the hands of my partner.

When I finally decided to leave, he started to try to kill me. He followed me to the university, he would harass the professors, and keep me under watch. Once, in a bathroom, he pulled a knife on me, and another time, he came into my room and aimed a gun at me. It was the longest seconds of my life. I didn't have a way out—I only wanted peace, wanted security, wanted a new life. I wanted to imagine there was a life outside of this, that this wouldn't be my daughter's future, if she even had a future, because he threatened that if I didn't come back to him, he'd kill me, because I was his or no one's. It was hell; it was desperation.

I didn't want to come here for money, or for work. I didn't want any of that. The only thing I really needed was security, peace. I wanted to live. The countries surrounding Honduras are just as bad or worse than mine. I absolutely was not going to find any solution there, any hope.

It's full of fear, full of risk, to cross borders, but in our hearts and minds, I know there was going to be hope at the end of this darkness. It came down to either dying in Honduras or try to find a new life here. I had always heard that the United States was a place where you might have security, where you can make your own future if you work and you struggle, but the important thing is safety, to me.

When I had my credible fear interview, I was so anxious, so worried. Your whole life depends on what you tell one person. You're out of your head with anxiety, you don't have any proof with you, you haven't eaten well or slept well. I was worried that if this other person simply didn't want to accept me, or didn't care about my case, my whole life would just die there, all my hope.

Without my lawyers, my chances of winning asylum would have gone down to 10% or less. I know what my life has been, my story is true and I can express it and retell it a thousand times, but when it came time to fill out a form or navigate this new system, I wouldn't have been able to

do it. These forms are also so hard because the words are so different from the way that people normally speak, and if you don't even know the language well, it's so much harder. Applying for asylum is a process that takes a lot of work from the attorney, but also from the client—it's an involved process to get the best results.

When I had my day in court, before a judge, I understood that I would be treated better, listened to better, and that I had time to prepare my evidence, time to express what I had lived. I understood that my future was in the hands of the judge, but I trusted that this person would do justice. I think a judge symbolizes justice.

If I had not had the opportunity to arrive in the United States, if I had not had the opportunity to fight for my political asylum case, I do not know if I would be alive. Today, my daughter smiles, she has a future ahead of her, and I try to work hard so that she will be a good person, a person who helps her family, who helps her community, who comes out ahead, who is an example for others.

With this proposed rule, many of the people will be hurt; it isn't just a rule, it's their life. Many of these people will return to their countries and won't tell their stories any longer, because they won't exist.

/s/

Helen Doe*

*Pseudonym used to protect confidentiality

Witness Attestation

I, Alejandra Oliva, attest that this statement was drafted by a client of the National Immigrant Justice Center who has won asylum or withholding of removal. The client decided to use a pseudonym to protect her confidentiality.

/s/

Alejandra Oliva
Communications Coordinator
National Immigrant Justice Center