

NEWS

**Asylum granted to family**

BY ROBERT POLNER. STAFF WRITER

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Moeed Malik's upbringing in Queens has been filled with Halloween costumes, in-line skates and Chicken McNuggets.

And since Sept. 11, 2001, the threat of deportation.

"My son loves the U.S. and the freedom he has here," said his mother, Fozia Naveed, 39, who fled Pakistan with her husband, Naveed Malik, a taxi driver, when their son was just 4.

Happily for them, a Manhattan immigration judge this week lifted that threat for the now 15-year-old Moeed and his family, who live in Maspeth.

In a relatively rare victory for immigrants from an Islamic country the federal government targeted with tightened law enforcement and raids after the destruction of the World Trade Center, Judge Sarah Burr granted political asylum to the boy and his parents.

"This is a tremendous relief for everyone involved," said the family's attorney, Elizabeth OuYang. "They've been living here for more than 10 years, and Moeed, he's very Americanized. He can't write or read Urdu, though he can speak some. From his dress to his vernacular to his taste in sports and music, he's a very Americanized teenager."

In 1993, shortly after the family's arrival at Kennedy Airport, the father filed for political asylum, claiming a fear of persecution in Pakistan because of his past involvement in an opposition party. The request was denied in 1998, and the family was given a month to leave or face deportation.

By then, Moeed's three sisters had been born. Unable to raise the money to return to Pakistan within the month, the family stayed, as undocumented immigrants.

In January 2003, Naveed Malik was arrested on his deportation order and detained for three months in a New Jersey jail.

The legal argument that led to the reopening of the case and granting of political asylum succeeded largely on the strength of Moheed's claim that in Pakistan, he would face anti-American sentiment, if not the pressure to join up with jihadists, as an adolescent with American habits.

"I am so thankful," Naveed Malik said yesterday. "As a father and a husband, my family feels free and safe in the U.S. It's a great day for us. Thanks God."

And his son? "Oh, he's so happy. Anti-American sentiment was so high over there, especially since the Iraq war. That really puzzles him."

NEWSDAY FILE PHOTO, 2003/JIRO OSE - Fozia Naveed and children Mifrah, Mawra, Moeizza and Moeed. Naveed Malik is in the photo.

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