

NEWS

A Family on the Edge / With dad jailed, now they fear deportation

By Mae M. Cheng. STAFF WRITER

666 words

3 March 2003

Newsday

QUEENS

A06

English

Copyright 2003, Newsday. All Rights Reserved.

For the four Naveed children of Maspeth, a relatively comfortable and carefree life has been turned upside down.

Their father, Malik Naveed, 40, the family breadwinner, was arrested under a deportation order after his request for asylum was denied.

Their mother, Fozia Naveed, 38, is raising the children by herself while struggling to stay healthy after undergoing heart-valve replacement surgery two years ago.

Now, worst of all, the family has to deal with the grim possibility that it may be deported to Pakistan.

"If they send us back, we're going to be very poor," said Moeed Naveed, 13, the oldest child and the only one born in Pakistan. He arrived with his parents in the United States when he was 3.

"Over here, we're surviving," said Moeed, who has been raised with Halloween costumes, Rollerblades and McDonald's. "Over there, people will think I'm different because I've been here. I won't be able to adjust."

Malik Naveed filed for political asylum shortly after showing up in the United States with his family in 1993. He claimed a fear of persecution in Pakistan because of his involvement in an opposition political party. But his asylum request was denied in 1998, and the Naveeds were given a month to leave or face deportation.

By then, Moeed's three sisters had been born. According to a deposition filed by Fozia Naveed, the family was unable

to raise enough money to return to Pakistan within the month. They decided instead to remain in their rented Maspeth apartment.

Although they were undocumented immigrants, the family settled into a comfortable routine, with Malik Naveed working as a cab driver, picking up his children after school.

On Jan. 8, everything changed.

On the way home after picking up two of his daughters, Malik Naveed was stopped by officials who had been dispatched to arrest him on a deportation order. He is among many immigrants who have been arrested since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks under a federal crackdown. Ultimately, he was sent to a New Jersey jail, where he continues to be held.

Malik Naveed calls his family twice a week, and the children have seen their father once since his arrest, his wife said. The hardest part for Moeed and his siblings, Mawra, 9, Moeizza, 8, and Mifrah, 5, is the thought that they may have to move to Pakistan.

An immigration judge has given the family until tomorrow to file a request to have immigration officials reconsider their asylum case. For a judge to reopen the case, though, officials would have to find the case compelling enough to competition with the family.

"It's not easy, but it's possible," said Liz OuYang, an attorney assisting the nonprofit Coney Island Avenue Project on the Naveeds' case.

OuYang contends the family's situation has changed dramatically since its asylum case was originally filed. Now, there are three U.S.-born children in the mix, and all three would have a difficult time adjusting to a new life in Pakistan.

Fozia Naveed herself fears Moeed might be kidnapped because of his pro-American views, or her daughters might end up as child laborers or even prostitutes due to the poverty in Pakistan. She is frequently in tears.

"The three U.S. children can't be left here without their parents, nor can they be sent back to be targets of anti-American sentiments," OuYang said.

Mark Thorn, a New York immigration service spokesman, said his office could not comment on asylum cases because of confidentiality concerns.

For now, the family is surviving on a sliver of hope.

"My kids don't want to go to Pakistan," Fozia Naveed said. "They love this country."

Newsday Photo / Jiro Ose - The Naveeds, from left: Fozia, with daughters Mifrah, Mawra, Moeizza and son Moeed. Father Malik, in photo, is in jail.

Document nday000020030303dz330002c