

A Fearful Dilemma for Alien Families

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Body

To the Editor:

That only a small number of undocumented **aliens** have applied for legalization under the new immigration law is likely due to something more than "early administrative problems" (news story, June 2). For many **aliens** the decision not to apply is based on a fear of **family** separation.

The new law requires that **aliens** must individually meet the requirements for legalization, such as having lived illegally in the United States since 1981. But many who meet these requirements have spouses or children who don't.

For example, assume that an undocumented worker entered the country in 1981. In 1982, after finding a job and place to live, he was joined by his wife and child. Under the new law only the father qualifies for legalization. What should this **family** do? Separate? Or should the wife and child remain in the United States illegally?

Aware that husbands and wives and parents and children are not treated as **family** units, many **aliens** are afraid to apply for legalization. Their fear is reinforced by several aspects of the process itself:

First, the applicant must list the name and location of every son, daughter, brother, sister and present and former spouse. The Immigration and Naturalization Service justifies collecting this information for statistical and planning purposes. From an applicant's perspective, however, providing the I.N.S. with the names and whereabouts of other **aliens** comes close to aiding and abetting the enemy. Mistrust of I.N.S.'s motive is further enhanced by the use of former border patrol agents as legalization officers.

Second, there is no clear I.N.S. policy on the issue of **family** separation except that **families** will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Applicants can take little comfort in this assurance, however, since the I.N.S. has not made known what criteria will be used.

Remedies to prevent **family** separation are available within American immigrations law. Senator Alan Cranston has introduced a joint resolution urging I.N.S. district directors to use their discretion under existing law to keep **families** intact.

So long as **aliens** must choose between legalization and the integrity of their **families**, it should be no surprise that participation in the program is less than ex-pected. CAROL SANGER Associate Professor of Law Santa Clara University Santa Clara, Calif., June 5, 1987 U.N. Might Stave Off Trouble in Burundi To the Editor:

James Brooke's June 4 news article accurately silhouettes the ethnic divisions in Burundi. The alienation is deeply rooted in the culture, and it will take some time before any serious modification takes place.

I worked for almost three years as the U.S. Ambassador (1969-72) trying to introduce ideas about dialogue and reduction of tensions. Leaders of both the Tutsi and Hutu communities responded with interest to the standard

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techniques to reduce tensions, but these efforts collapsed in the economic troubles of early 1972. Fear replaced reason, and the bloodbath of 1972 occurred. There were previous ones. Unless something is done soon there will be another one. Following the 1972 killings, I proposed geographic separation of the two communities. It is only a temporary solution, but has been used in many other countries.

Burundi, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Northern Ireland are witnessing killings and chaos rooted in centuries of racial, ethnic or religious alienations. Could not the United Nations take on a more active role in these situations, as it did with some success in Cyprus?

THOMAS PATRICK MELADY

Fairfield, Conn., June 5, 1987

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