

Democracy at home may block asylum bids

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Body

A group of Nicaraguan exiles heads to court today in an effort to **block** a U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service policy that **may** mean deportation for some immigrants who got political **asylum** in the United States.

Targeted for possible deportation: Immigrants from Nicaragua, Panama, Poland, Hungary - all countries embracing **democracy** in recent months - who have not yet gained permanent residence status.

The INS policy surfaced when an internal memo became public last week.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service says the reason for granting **asylum** - proving a well-founded fear of persecution if they return to their homelands - **may** no longer exist.

"That is real bureaucratic double talk," says Robert Boyer, who will file a lawsuit today for Nicaraguan exiles.

The issue is raising fears in Miami, **home** to more than 100,000 Nicaraguans, many of whom have received or are seeking political **asylum**.

"The economy and the politics in Nicaragua are still very bad," says Mario Castillo Nunez, 43, who left Nicaragua in 1987 and lives here with his wife and four children.

He does not believe that Nicaragua is a **democracy** simply because U.S.- backed Violetta Chamorro won the presidency in February.

"The Chamorristas and the Sandinistas are still violently fighting," Castillo says.

Says banker Roberto Arguello, a Nicaraguan native: "The situation in Nicaragua has changed on paper but not in reality. Where are Nicaraguans going to go? There are no houses, no businesses. The measures are very unfair."

Of the four countries, Nicaraguans have received the most **asylum** applications and would be the most affected, INS officials say.

"It's a clarification of ... existing law," says INS spokesman Richard Kenney. "We're saying that ... we have to review an (immigrant's) status. The policy isn't limited to any nationality."

Kenney says it could be five years before the cases are heard because of backlogs.

In Chicago - **home** of half the 4,000 Polish immigrants affected by the ruling - "the fear is terrible," says Roman Pucinski, president of Illinois chapter of the Polish-American Congress.

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"These people sold their homes, sold their furniture in Poland; they thought they were going to start a new life in America," says Pucinski. "Now all that may be wiped out."

"In Poland, we were scared about the government. Here, I felt free. Now, this is the same situation as Poland," says Dan Malinowski, 31, who has been in the USA for 2 1/2 years. "I feel like someone is looking for me again. I'm scared."

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