

Feds set to deport model (non-Muslim) immigrant

Exclusive: Erik Rush tells of Kurd who came as refugee, built business, faces death in Turkey

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Our Opinion: Parlak has earned his freedom

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Against all notions of reason and fairness, the U.S. government has failed to grant Ibrahim Parlak the permanent residency he has long sought.

On Tuesday, however, the Kurdish immigrant and Berrien County resident received some good news. At a meeting in Detroit, his immigration officer told him that the Department of Homeland Security had lifted many of his restrictions — including requirements that he report to Detroit in person once a year and by phone once a year. The supervision program was part of a temporary deferral on his deportation that was granted to Parlak in 2010.

He told Tribune reporter Christian Sheckler that it “looks like something is changing for a better direction.”

We certainly hope so.

Since being granted asylum by the United States in 1992, Parlak has worked hard to make a good life for himself here in the adopted country that he clearly loves. He is an immigrant who made his community better, earning the respect of those who know him. Yet the popular restaurateur has been living in limbo since the Department of Homeland Security deemed him a threat shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when he was jailed for allegedly failing to disclose his arrest for separatism in Turkey, where he was tortured and imprisoned.

Among those who have taken up his cause are former U.S. Sen. Carl Levin of Michigan and U.S. Rep. Fred Upton, R-St. Joseph. Over the years, both have regularly introduced bills that would have granted Parlak permanent residency.

The apparent change of heart by immigration officials is great for Parlak and his many supporters. But the granting of permanent residency would be even better. As we have noted in numerous comments during the past decade, Parlak, a model resident by all accounts, has earned his freedom. He deserves to stay in this country.

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Ibrahim Parlak, a Kurdish immigrant who has been fighting deportation for more than a decade, sits in his Harbert restaurant, Cafe Gulistan. SBT Photo/ROBERT FRANKLIN