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Judge Paul DeFonzo
Immigration Court
1000 Second Ave, Suite 2500
Seattle, WA 98104

July 13, 2017

Dear Judge Paul DeFonzo,

As the leader of a faith community that values the gifts of migrants, immigrants and refugees, as the mother of a West Point graduate and army veteran, as a veteran of the United States Army myself – I have a difficult time understanding the apparent years long crusade against Muhammad Zahid Chaudhry. It is increasingly hard to believe that what Mr. Chaudhry has gone through is anything other than government discrimination against a member of the Muslim faith.

Mr. Chaudhry is a disabled U.S. Army veteran who has been decorated for his service. He sustained injuries while serving in the US military that have left him permanently in a wheelchair. Military officials have not only recommended him for citizenship but also stated that to “deny Zahid citizenship would be a crime.”

Mr. Chaudhry has been an exemplary member in the community – offering his time and talents to many organizations in the community. He has volunteered with the Red Cross, the local fire department, Habitat for Humanity, Native American organizations and more. All this he has done on top of being a kind, caring and generous neighbor to people of all ages and circumstances.

Most compelling of all, though, is the fact that Mr. Chaudhry’s marriage of 16 years to an American citizen in itself qualifies him for citizenship.

How can giving *more credence* to some incident in a different country over 21 years ago, on the other side of the world, than to Mr. Chaudhry’s years of unrelenting compassion and service in and for the United States be just? This is especially perplexing when that incident is known to have been inaccurately reported and spun in an arbitrary direction due to prejudice. This country’s longstanding laws and rules of evidence must not be cast aside. If they are we will live in a new day where even the dawn is dark.

As a pastor, as a veteran, as a student of and advocate for justice; I respectfully request that you close this case and let Mr. Chaudhry and his wife live out their lives within the community that they both serve with generous and open hearts.

Sincerely,

Rev. Amy Elizabeth Hessel
Pastor, The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd