

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

FILED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

APR 25 2023

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

MOLLY C. DWYER, CLERK
U.S. COURT OF APPEALS

JUAN CARLOS GONZALEZ DIAZ,

No. 21-70946

Petitioner,

Agency No. A098-988-692

v.

MEMORANDUM*

MERRICK B. GARLAND, Attorney
General,

Respondent.

On Petition for Review of an Order of the
Board of Immigration Appeals

Submitted April 17, 2023**

Before: CLIFTON, R. NELSON, and BRESS, Circuit Judges.

Juan Carlos Gonzalez Diaz, a native and citizen of El Salvador, petitions pro se for review of the Board of Immigration Appeals' ("BIA") order dismissing his appeal from an immigration judge's decision denying his applications for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture

* This disposition is not appropriate for publication and is not precedent except as provided by Ninth Circuit Rule 36-3.

** The panel unanimously concludes this case is suitable for decision without oral argument. *See* Fed. R. App. P. 34(a)(2).

(“CAT”). We have jurisdiction under 8 U.S.C. § 1252. We review for substantial evidence the agency’s factual findings, including determinations regarding social distinction. *Conde Quevedo v. Barr*, 947 F.3d 1238, 1241-42 (9th Cir. 2020). We review de novo the legal question of whether a particular social group is cognizable, except to the extent that deference is owed to the BIA’s interpretation of the governing statutes and regulations. *Id.* We deny the petition for review.

Substantial evidence supports the agency’s determination that Gonzalez Diaz failed to establish he was or would be persecuted on account of membership in his proposed family-based particular social groups. *See Ayala v. Holder*, 640 F.3d 1095, 1097 (9th Cir. 2011) (even if membership in a particular social group is established, an applicant must still show that “persecution was or will be *on account of* his membership in such group”).

Substantial evidence supports the agency’s determination that Gonzalez Diaz failed to establish his proposed returnee-based social group is socially distinct. *See Conde Quevedo*, 947 F.3d at 1243 (absence of society-specific evidence of social distinction). Thus, the BIA did not err in concluding that Gonzalez Diaz did not establish membership in a cognizable particular social group. *See Reyes v. Lynch*, 842 F.3d 1125, 1131 (9th Cir. 2016) (in order to demonstrate membership in a particular social group, “[t]he applicant must ‘establish that the group is (1) composed of members who share a common

immutable characteristic, (2) defined with particularity, and (3) socially distinct within the society in question” (quoting *Matter of M-E-V-G-*, 26 I. & N. Dec. 227, 237 (BIA 2014))).

We do not address Gonzalez Diaz’s contentions as to the asylum one-year bar, whether the harm he suffered rises to the level of persecution, the cognizability of the family-based particular social groups, and whether he could relocate because the BIA did not deny relief on these grounds. *See Santiago-Rodriguez v. Holder*, 657 F.3d 820, 829 (9th Cir. 2011) (“In reviewing the decision of the BIA, we consider only the grounds relied upon by that agency.” (citation and internal quotation marks omitted)).

Substantial evidence supports the agency’s denial of CAT protection because Gonzalez Diaz failed to show it is more likely than not he will be tortured by or with the consent or acquiescence of the government if returned to El Salvador. *See Aden v. Holder*, 589 F.3d 1040, 1047 (9th Cir. 2009).

The temporary stay of removal remains in place until the mandate issues.

PETITION FOR REVIEW DENIED.