

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

FILED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

FEB 21 2019

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

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

MAXIMO MENDEZ-MARIA, AKA
Maximino Cristobal Mendez Orozco,

Petitioner,

v.

WILLIAM P. BARR, Attorney General,

Respondent.

No. 18-70781

Agency No. A205-320-748

MEMORANDUM*

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

Submitted February 19, 2019**

Before: FERNANDEZ, SILVERMAN, and WATFORD, Circuit Judges.

Maximo Mendez-Maria, a native and citizen of Guatemala, petitions for review of the Board of Immigration Appeals' ("BIA") order dismissing his appeal from an immigration judge's decision denying his application for withholding of removal and relief under the Convention Against Torture ("CAT"). Our

* 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).

jurisdiction is governed by 8 U.S.C. § 1252. We review questions of law de novo, *Cerezo v. Mukasey*, 512 F.3d 1163, 1166 (9th Cir. 2008), except to the extent that deference is owed to the BIA's determination of the governing statutes and regulations, *Simeonov v. Ashcroft*, 371 F.3d 532, 535 (9th Cir. 2004). We review for substantial evidence the agency's factual findings. *Zehatye v. Gonzales*, 453 F.3d 1182, 1184-85 (9th Cir. 2006). We deny in part and dismiss in part the petition for review.

The agency did not err in finding that Mendez-Maria failed to establish membership in a cognizable social group. *See Reyes v. Lynch*, 842 F.3d 1125, 1131 (9th Cir. 2016) (in order to demonstrate membership in a particular 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))). Substantial evidence supports the BIA's determination that Mendez-Maria failed to establish that any harm he experienced or fears in Guatemala was or would be on account of a protected ground. *See Zetino v. Holder*, 622 F.3d 1007, 1016 (9th Cir. 2010) (“An [applicant's] desire to be free from harassment by criminals motivated by theft or random violence by

gang members bears no nexus to a protected ground.”). Thus, Mendez-Maria’s withholding of removal claim fails.

Substantial evidence also supports the agency’s denial of CAT relief because Mendez-Maria failed to show it is more likely than not that he would be tortured by or with the consent or acquiescence of the Guatemalan government. *See Aden v. Holder*, 589 F.3d 1040, 1047 (9th Cir. 2009).

We lack jurisdiction to consider Mendez-Maria’s contentions regarding his religious persecution claim because he failed to raise them to the BIA. *See Barron v. Ashcroft*, 358 F.3d 674, 677-78 (9th Cir. 2004).

PETITION FOR REVIEW DENIED in part; DISMISSED in part.