

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

FILED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS

APR 21 2022

FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

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

SAMUEL VACA PEREZ,

Petitioner,

v.

MERRICK B. GARLAND, Attorney  
General,

Respondent.

No. 21-70878

Agency No. A204-625-781

MEMORANDUM\*

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

Submitted April 11, 2022\*\*

Before: McKEOWN, CHRISTEN, and BRESS, Circuit Judges.

Samuel Vaca Perez, a native and citizen of Mexico, petitions pro se for review of the Board of Immigration Appeals' ("BIA") order dismissing his appeal from an immigration judge's decision denying his application for asylum, withholding of removal, and relief under the Convention Against Torture ("CAT").

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\* 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).

We have jurisdiction under 8 U.S.C. § 1252. 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. *Conde Quevedo v. Barr*, 947 F.3d 1238, 1241-42 (9th Cir. 2020). We review for substantial evidence the agency's factual findings. *Id.* at 1241. We deny the petition for review.

The agency did not err in concluding that Vaca Perez 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))). Substantial evidence supports the BIA's determination that Vaca Perez otherwise failed to establish the harm he experienced or fears in Mexico was or would be on account of a protected ground. *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”); *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, Vaca Perez’s asylum and withholding of removal claims fail.

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

The temporary stay of removal remains in place until issuance of the mandate. The motion for a stay of removal is otherwise denied.

**PETITION FOR REVIEW DENIED.**