

Obama's aunt can stay in U.S. for now

by UPI

BOSTON -- An immigration judge Wednesday allowed the aunt of U.S. President Barack Obama to stay in the United States until February 2010, officials said.

U.S. Immigration Judge Leonard Shapiro continued the deportation case of Zeituni Onyango for 10 months during a closed-door hearing in Boston, allowing the half-sister of Obama's late Kenyan father to remain in the country until then, The Boston Globe reported.

Smiling broadly as she emerged from a brief hearing, Onyango said, "praise God," and held her head high as she was surrounded by a cadre of men in suits, the newspaper said.

Immigration Court spokeswoman Fatimah Mateen told reporters that Shapiro treated the Onyango case "just like any other case before an immigration judge."

Mike Rogers, a spokesman for Onyango's lawyers, told the newspaper that Onyango would "request to stay permanently in the United States" during the next hearing.

Analysts said the case is being closely watched as a test of Obama's commitment to immigration laws. Onyango lost a bid for asylum in 2003 but continues to live in subsidized public housing in Boston while she appeals the deportation order.

The newspaper said Onyango's lawyers could ask the judge to consider Onyango's chronic health problems or political upheavals in her native Kenya as grounds to allow her to remain in the United States.

Obama has declined to get involved in the case and has said he was not aware of his aunt's legal problems until they surfaced during last year's campaign.

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