

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr., Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Noem,

We write to express our deep concern regarding recent reports of U.S. deportations involving immigrants being sent to third countries, such as El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama, especially those from countries where they face significant risks of persecution, exploitation, or other harm. Given the gravity of these reports, we respectfully request clarification on the policies and practices of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to ensure that U.S. actions align our obligations under U.S. and international law.

Legal and Human Rights Considerations

1. How many individuals have been deported by the U.S. government to third countries since January 20, 2025? To what third countries have they been deported? What are the deported individuals' countries of origin?
2. What criteria was used to identify individuals for deportation to third countries such as El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama?
3. Did Customs and Border Protection (CBP) provide the deported individuals with meaningful opportunities to claim asylum or other forms of humanitarian relief before deportation? What protocols were followed to ensure compliance with US and international law?
4. Given recent [reports](#) that Panama has released some of the detained migrants with temporary humanitarian permits, what steps is DHS taking to ensure that these individuals are not placed in further danger?^[1] Has DHS engaged in any discussions with Panamanian officials regarding their legal status and protection moving forward?
5. How does this practice of deporting immigrants on flights to third countries in Central America align with the United States' obligations under domestic and international human rights law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the U.S. from returning individuals to places where they may face harm, and indirect non-refoulement, which prohibits the U.S. from putting individuals at risk through removal to a third country?
6. What assurances does DHS have that Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, or any other third country with which deportation agreements exist, meet the standard in U.S. law for a

“safe third country” and are able to provide access to a full and fair procedure for adjudicating an asylum claim or other humanitarian protection?

7. The New York Times [reports](#) that individuals deported to Panama include children and women fleeing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and Christian converts fleeing the Islamic Republic of Iran.^[2] Given that deportees face risks such as arbitrary detention, persecution, or even death in their home countries, what assurances can DHS provide that they will not be sent back to face certain danger?

Due Process and Protection for Vulnerable Groups

1. How many of the individuals deported on the flights since January 20, 2025, were children? Were any of the children unaccompanied minors? Were any of the children separated from their family members before, during, or after their deportation to a third country? Were any of these children undergoing medical treatments in the United States, such as for cancer?
2. How many of the individuals were pregnant women or individuals suffering from serious health issues? What is being done to ensure that these individuals receive adequate care after being deported?
3. What safeguards are in place to prevent deportations that may expose children and other vulnerable individuals to physical danger, trafficking, or exploitation?

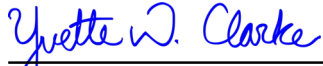
International Cooperation and Agreements

1. What agreements, if any, exist between DHS and the governments of El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama or any other third countries regarding the deportation or reception of immigrants?
2. Does DHS intend to continue this deportation practice to third countries? If so, what measures will be implemented to ensure transparency, accountability, and the protection of affected individuals?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to your prompt and thorough response to these critical questions.

Sincerely,


Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



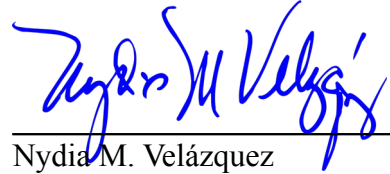
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



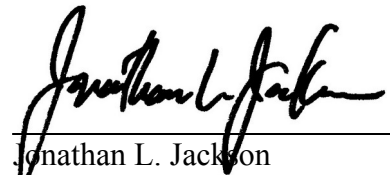
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



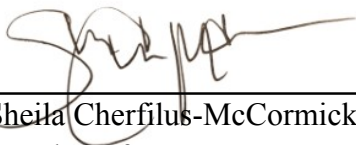
Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress

^[1] New York Times, *Panama Says It Will Release Migrants From Detention Camp*, Genevieve Glatzky, Julie Turkewitz, Annie Correal, and Farnaz Fassihi, March 7, 2025.

^[2] New York Times, *Locked in a Jungle Camp, Migrants Deported to Panama Face Uncertain Future*, by Julie Turkewitz, Farnaz Fassihi, and Annie Correal, February 28, 2025.