

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 11, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Noem:

Recent actions by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have deeply unsettled many in the Iranian American community and raise serious questions about DHS's approach to national security and commitment to enforcing humanitarian protections.

The implication by this administration that Iranian Americans are more likely to engage in terrorism or criminal activity is absurd, false, and outrageous. Iranian Americans, like other proud and patriotic members of our communities, often bring with them stories of resilience. In the case of many Iranians, they fled a repressive, theocratic regime in the Islamic Republic of Iran in search of freedom and opportunity. Regardless, no group of people in this country should be targeted for their country of origin, their faith, or the color of their skin.

The statistics don't lie – DHS and ICE are casting an overly broad net to sweep up individuals with no criminal history or record, including long-residing community members, under the guise of “public safety.” As detailed by the Cato Institute, your Department is “primarily detaining individuals with no criminal convictions of any kind” and of those with criminal convictions, “they are overwhelming[ly] not the violent offenses that ICE continuously uses to justify its deportation agenda.”¹ According to nonpublic data, ICE detained 204,297 individuals since October 1, 2024, of which 133,685 individuals, or 65 percent, had no criminal convictions.² Additionally, 93% of those detained had never been convicted of any violent offenses.³

Rather than focus on individuals who pose genuine threats to our communities, your Department appears to be filling arbitrary deportation quotas by apparently systematically targeting Iranian Americans, regardless of their immigration status, their time spent in the United States, or any other relevant factors. Your officers are, in essence, targeting already traumatized individuals

¹ David J. Bier, *65 Percent of People Taken by ICE Had No Convictions, 93 Percent No Violent Convictions*, CATO INSTITUTE (Jun. 20, 2025), available at <https://www.cato.org/blog/65-people-taken-ice-had-no-convictions-93-no-violent-convictions>

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

who have escaped religious or political persecution and shattering the hope these individuals have for attaining the American dream.

Most concerning, DHS is terrorizing those who have followed the legal asylum pathway to enter the U.S. Applying for asylum, especially given the very real threats that many Iranians may face in their home country, is difficult. It requires extensive vetting by several layers of our government that can sometimes take several years to resolve. That is why recent reporting that the Trump Administration plans to arbitrarily increase the dismissal of asylum claims to speed up deportations is so concerning.⁴ Further, unjustly denying legitimate asylum claims will make it exponentially more difficult for these individuals to find a third country that will accept them, which threatens their continued safety. Many of these Iranians held by ICE would likely face “a vastly increased danger of persecution” if they were to be deported to Iran because of “changed conditions [in the country]”, and could be imprisoned, tortured, or executed.⁵ This is especially true for the Christian Iranian asylum seekers, including one who was arrested outside of a church in Los Angeles this weekend.⁶ As Pastor Ara Torosian wondered following the arrest, “[am I] in the street[s] of Tehran, or the street[s] of Los Angeles?”⁷

To help us better understand the circumstances and details surrounding what appears to be an intentional targeting of Iranians residing in the U.S., including through coordinated raids or the dismissal of asylum claims, we ask that you respond to the following questions within 14 business days of receipt of this letter.

1. What specific statutory or regulatory authority is DHS relying on to implement President Trump’s detainment and removal policies per Executive Order 15159?
 - a. Has DHS or ICE issued directives that prioritize enforcement actions against individuals without criminal records versus those with criminal records or convictions?
 - b. Do you have in your possession any verbal or written instructions or communications to target or increase arrests of individuals without criminal records or convictions?
2. How many DHS, ICE, or other agency agents or officers have been reassigned from, among other types of work, counterterrorism or counterintelligence operations since January 20, 2025?
3. How many U.S. residents of Iranian nationality or descent have been detained by ICE in total since January 20, 2025? Since June 13, 2025?

⁴ Priscilla Alvarez, *Exclusive: New Trump administration plan could end asylum claims and speed deportations for hundreds of thousands of migrants*, ABC 17 NEWS (Jun. 25, 2025), available at <https://abc17news.com/news/2025/06/25/exclusive-new-trump-administration-plan-could-end-asylum-claims-and-speed-deportations-for-hundreds-of-thousands-of-migrants/>

⁵ Kim Chandler, Claire Rush, & Elliot Spagat, *After decades in the US, Iranians arrested in Trump’s deportation drive*, APNEWS (Jun. 28, 2025), available at <https://apnews.com/article/iran-immigration-arrests-us-trump-deportations-9a4136657bda3a277125738807848368>

⁶ Fiona Andre, *Pastor Films as Masked Federal Agents Arrest Iranian Christian Asylum-Seekers in LA*, THE ROYS REPORT (Jun. 29, 2025), available at <https://julieroys.com/pastor-films-as-masked-federal-agents-arrest-iranian-christian-asylum-seekers-in-la/>

⁷ *Ibid.*

4. Of the number of Iranian Americans detained, how many had prior criminal convictions?
 - a. How many had convictions for violent crimes?
5. How many Iranian American asylum applicants have been arrested or detained by DHS or ICE since January 20, 2025?
6. What are the current criteria that DHS uses to deny or dismiss asylum claims, and have these criteria changed since January 20, 2025?
 - a. Has DHS or ICE developed any risk assessment protocols to determine the potential persecution a deported individual might face if they were deported to the Islamic Republic of Iran?
 - b. How many Iranian American asylum applicants have had their case dismissed by DHS?
 - c. How many deportations of Iranian nationals have taken place while an asylum claim has been pending?
 - d. Where have these Iranian nationals been deported or removed to?

We look forward to your timely response by July XX, 2025.

Sincerely,



Dave Min
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress