

URGENT ACTION

STOP ILLEGAL EXPULSIONS TO EL SALVADOR

Following a presidential proclamation invoking the Alien Enemies Act by President Trump, targeting alleged members of the Tren de Aragua (TdA) criminal group, 255 individuals have been illegally removed from the USA to El Salvador and are now being held at the *Centro de Confinamiento Contra el Terrorismo* (CECOT), a prison notorious for its inhumane conditions. We call on the Trump administration to immediately return those that were illegally removed to El Salvador back to the US and halt any subsequent expulsions or deportations of Venezuelans or other third country nationals, complying with the decisions of the US Judiciary.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

***The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security***

*U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20528
USA*

Email: dhssecretary@hq.dhs.gov

Dear Secretary Noem,

I am extremely concerned over the recent unlawful expulsions of individuals from the United States to El Salvador under the purported authority of the Alien Enemies Act.

Despite a court order prohibiting their removal, 238 individuals were expelled to El Salvador on 16 March, followed by 17 more on 30 March. These individuals include people who were engaged in ongoing legal proceedings, had no criminal record or ties to a gang, or had already been granted protection under U.S. law, including the Convention Against Torture. Many were expelled without removal orders, a violation of established legal processes. Disturbingly, these individuals have been transferred to the Centro de Confinamiento Contra el Terrorismo (CECOT), a prison notorious for its inhumane conditions, where reports document extreme overcrowding, denial of medical care, and widespread ill-treatment amounting to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. The families of those unlawfully sent to El Salvador have not received any official information about their loved ones' whereabouts making it impossible for them to know where they are being held.

The United States must uphold the principle of non-refoulement, which unequivocally prohibits states from returning, removing, or transferring individuals to any country where they would face a real risk of serious human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment. By expelling these individuals to El Salvador, the U.S. government has placed them in grave danger. Further removals, particularly any subsequent transfer to Venezuela, would constitute additional violations of international law.

I urge you to immediately return those that were illegally removed to El Salvador so that they can continue their immigration proceedings in the US, and halt any subsequent expulsions, complying with the decisions of the US Judiciary.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 15 March 2025, President Trump [invoked](#) the Alien Enemies Act, 50 USC 21, claiming that the Tren de Aragua (TdA) criminal group “is perpetrating, attempting, and threatening an invasion or predatory incursion against the territory of the United States” and warning that “Venezuelan citizens 14 years of age or older who are members of TdA, are within the United States, and are not actually naturalized or lawful permanent residents of the United States are liable to be apprehended, restrained, secured, and removed as Alien Enemies.” The Alien Enemies Act is a power granted to the President only in times of actual or imminent war against another country. Until now, the Act has been invoked in only three eras, always during a declared war or within days of one being declared. Moreover, the last time the Act was used was to detain over 120,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps in the United States during World War II.

On 15 March, a class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of five Venezuelan individuals at risk of removal under the presidential proclamation on the Alien Enemies Act. The District Court in D.C. issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) for the plaintiffs and scheduled a hearing to further address extending this order to the described class. Later that day, the court preliminarily certified a class –extending the TRO to everyone detained who is designated under the proclamation– and ordered the government to turn back any flights on their way to El Salvador. The government appealed the TRO to the D.C. Circuit, which upheld the restraining order. The administration has now appealed to the Supreme Court.

On 16 March, after the above orders were issued, the government unlawfully expelled 238 individuals to the *Centro de Confinamiento Contra el Terrorismo* (CECOT), an infamous prison in El Salvador, under the purported authority of the Alien Enemies Act. On 30 March, an additional 17 individuals, both Salvadoran and Venezuelan, were deported to El Salvador. According to available public information, those expelled include individuals who were in the midst of ongoing court processes, were arrested while complying with their immigration obligations, were already granted protections in the United States including under the Convention Against Torture, and were labelled as gang members for their tattoos or connection to the Venezuelan state of Aragua with no other evidence. In fact, even U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials have since admitted “many” had no criminal record at all and some were removed because of a perception they may commit crimes in the future. Importantly, these expulsions are not deportations, a legal process defined in U.S. law. Those that were expelled on March 16 were expelled without removal orders, seemingly to serve an indefinite prison sentence under a system where fundamental human rights are routinely ignored. Moreover, the family members of those expelled have not received any official communication that their loved ones were sent to El Salvador and have only been able to determine this through photos and videos shared online, and a list of names published by the press. The individual’s have been removed from the ICE Locator meaning that their current “official” locations are unknown.

Amnesty International has extensively [documented](#) the inhumane conditions within detentions centres in El Salvador, including the CECOT, where those removed are now being held. Reports indicate extreme overcrowding, lack of access to adequate medical care, and widespread ill-treatment amounting to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Additionally, Salvadoran organizations have reported more than 300 deaths of individuals while in state custody, some of them showing clear signs of violence. No individual should be subjected to such conditions.

The principle of *non-refoulement*, a cornerstone of international human rights law, unequivocally prohibits states from returning, removing, or transferring individuals to any country where they would face a real risk of serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, or ill-treatment. By removing individuals to El Salvador under these circumstances, the United States has placed them in grave danger and failed to uphold its obligations its legal obligations. Meanwhile, El Salvador must be held accountable for facilitating policies that violate the rights of migrants and people seeking safety. Any subsequent removal of the individuals from El Salvador to Venezuela would also violate the principle of *non-refoulement*. The US government must immediately return those that were illegally removed to El Salvador so that they can continue their immigration proceedings in the US, halt any subsequent expulsions and comply with the decisions of the US Judiciary.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 July 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Migrants and people seeking safety (all pronouns)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A