

Different Tactics, Same Goal: Trump Deportations Taking Away *Everyone's* Rights

By Mose Stephens

As of this writing, the Trump administration has deported at least 137 people under the [Alien Enemies Act of 1798](#) and stripped more than thousand international students and scholars of their visas. In both situations, there seems to be an alarming lack of due process, the very thing in the Constitution that protects us from the government. This is just one of many examples of the Trump Administration attempting to overstep the judicial branch of government, and this should alarm every American citizen.



Student Visas

On March 25, Rumeysa Ozturk, a Tufts University doctoral student from Turkey, was abducted and detained by federal agents, some of them masked, as she was walking along the street near her home. A [video of the abduction](#) was widely circulated. Ozturk has not been charged with a crime, and the government has not given legal justification for her arrest. Despite a court order that demanded she be kept in Massachusetts until she goes to trial, Rumeysa has been taken from Massachusetts to New Hampshire to Vermont and then flown to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) outpost in Alexandria, Louisiana. This has been described as an ICE tactic: the courts there are more favorable to the Trump administration, and the ICE facility there is so remote it's hard for lawyers to travel there.

Ozturk's detention happened less than a month after a pro-Israel group highlighted an op-ed she co-wrote last year in the Tufts newspaper criticizing her school's response to pro-Palestinian student activists. The article also demanded that Tufts acknowledge the genocide in Palestine and divest from companies with ties to Israel. Although this op-ed hasn't been confirmed as the reason for her arrest, it is her only public action that links her to the pro-Palestinian support that this administration seems to be persecuting. Ozturk has been denied her constitutional rights to freedom of speech and due process. The executive branch seems to be doing everything in its power to operate independent of judicial restraint by ignoring court orders and making it as hard as possible for Rumeysa to speak with her lawyers.

Ozturk is just one of nearly [1,000 students who have had their visas revoked](#) and is among several students and professors who have been detained. Ozturk's detainment is an example of this administration's true intentions. [A coalition of 27 Jewish organizations have objected to Ozturk's arrest](#), writing, "The government . . . appears to be exploiting Jewish Americans' legitimate concerns about antisemitism as pretext for undermining core pillars of American

democracy, the rule of law, and the fundamental rights of free speech and academic debate on which this nation was built."

Other cases of students being detained without any due process are becoming more common. A University of Alabama student, Alireza Doroudi, was arrested and detained without any clear reason for his arrest. A Columbia University student, Mahmoud Khalil, was detained and is being held in Louisiana. Khalil's lawyers filed a petition alleging that his arrest and detention are violations of his rights to due process. They also say the government's decision to send him all the way to Louisiana wasn't just unnecessary but impeded their ability to represent him.

The Trump administration seems to be testing the waters of their power over the judicial branch by targeting foreign students in higher education. Many believe this is a deliberate test to see how much they can infringe citizens' rights to due process without pushback. Time will show exactly what their intentions are, but either way, it is hard to believe they will stop with foreign students. This could be the beginning of an attempt to persecute anyone – citizens, political opponents, activists – who opposes their power.

Eric Lee, a lawyer who represents a Cornell University student whose visa was revoked, says, "This is what happens in a dictatorship, and these are test cases. If the government can get away with doing this to these students, it can do it to everybody in this country. Your citizenship won't save you ... Your views will be next."

Alien Enemies Act

In a purported effort to fight a Venezuelan transnational gang, the Trump administration has, as of this writing, used the Alien Enemies Act to deport 137 people (and other legal justifications to deport many others) without due process. The Alien Enemies Act is a wartime act from just after our nation's birth that has been used only three times in American history. The Act is meant to allow the government to swiftly deport citizens of an invading nation in a time of actual war. After this deportation became public, the Trump administration argued that 238 migrants were all members of Tren de Aragua, a transnational gang from Venezuela aligned with Venezuelan government, which was perpetrating an invasion.

All these men were flown to [CECOT](#), a prison in El Salvador widely criticized by human rights organizations. CECOT is a prison meant for terrorists; the purpose is not to rehabilitate or release people back into the world. The only way out, in the words of El Salvador's justice minister, is in a coffin. This all happened without any due process. Many of these migrants are unaware of the charges filed against them. They have been flown to one of the harshest foreign prisons without ever being given a chance to defend themselves.

Among the 238 people, there are many egregious examples of the government's apparently baseless accusations. Kilmar Abrego Garcia is one. Garcia is a family man from Maryland, and he denies the accusations of his involvement with any gang. Garcia has never been convicted of a crime. He fled El Salvador when he was a teenager to escape the threat of gang violence to himself and his family. He had lived in the U.S. for 14 years, had three children, and worked in

construction. The evidence and reasoning behind his arrest is limited, flawed, or even nonexistent. Since Garcia was taken to CECOT, the Trump administration has stated that his arrest and transportation was an “administrative error.” In response, the Supreme Court called his deportation to a foreign prison illegal and ordered that he be brought home. But the Trump administration claims they cannot bring him back because he is in a foreign country.

Surprisingly, this is not due to the level of incompetence that we are all so used to with the Trump administration. This is a calculated and planned-out decision. This is what authoritarian governments do. They chip away at their citizens' rights by quietly testing what they can and can't get away with, then they come for you. The Trump administration has *knowingly* trapped a peaceful regular person in a foreign prison for the rest of his life. And [in a recent press conference, Donald Trump said that he would like to send American citizens to jails like this](#). The Trump administration believes they have found a loophole. We have plenty of secure prisons in our own country. Donald Trump wants to send people to prisons in foreign countries not just to deport them away from our country, but to get them away from our rule of law, to get them away from their lawyers, to get them away from our moral codes, and to get them away from the checks and balances that curtail his power.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia is just one of many innocent people that have been taken from their homes and families and sent to CECOT without due process. The Trump administration does not believe in due process. Donald Trump didn't lie when he stated he wanted to be a dictator. These actions may just be the next step in a long history of Trump's authoritarian tendencies, but there is something especially worrying about our president trying to avoid due process. Our due process is the one thing that allows us to defend ourselves and our other rights. If *one* of us isn't guaranteed due process, then *none* of us are guaranteed due process. What would you do if you were in Kilmar Abrego Garcia or Rumeysa Ozturk's position? Unfortunately, this is a legitimate question that we may all need to start asking ourselves.