

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Noem and Secretary Rubio:

On April 14, 2025, Mohsen K. Mahdawi, a U.S. permanent resident, entered a local U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office for what was supposed to be his final citizenship interview and then was instead arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents upon arrival. Masked, hooded men in plain clothes removed Mr. Mahdawi, he was then handcuffed and taken into an unmarked van from the USCIS office in Colchester, Vermont.¹ All Americans should be chilled by this action, taken straight out of dystopian fiction.

Americans may disagree on immigration policy, but we have always agreed that the Constitution guarantees people within our borders the most basic of rights including due process and free speech. This administration has ignored those fundamental rights in its horrific imprisonment of Mohsen K. Mahdawi.

If Mr. Mahdawi can be tricked into coming to a government office and then arrested for simply making statements that the Trump Administration does not agree with, every American is at risk. We write to express our profound outrage with this Administration's continued disappearance of lawful residents of the United States and to demand questions about Mr. Mahdawi's case.

According to his lawyers, Mr. Mahdawi, who was one of the organizers of pro-Palestinian demonstrations last year at Columbia University, was detained by immigration officials on Monday after arriving for an appointment in Vermont that he thought was a step toward becoming a U.S. citizen.² Mr. Mahdawi has had a green card for 10 years.

Americans were horrified last month when Mahmoud Khalil was removed from his apartment building for speech that the President disagreed with. And now, Mr. Mahdawi is the latest

¹ <https://www.wbur.org/news/2025/04/14/palestinian-columbia-student-ice-vermont>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/14/nyregion/columbia-student-palestinian-arrested-ice.html>

Palestinian student the Trump administration has targeted involved in pro-Palestinian organizing on U.S. college campuses. Mr. Mahdawi has not been accused of a crime. According to his lawyers, the Trump administration appears to be seeking his removal from the country under the same legal provision that it is using to detain Mr. Khalil.

The First Amendment protects the right of all people in the United States, including lawful permanent residents, to speak freely on political matters without fear of government retribution.³ The Immigration and Nationality Act prohibits the Secretary of State from excluding entry to noncitizens based on past or current lawful speech.⁴ In similar cases, the administration has relied on a dubious determination that a person's protected speech compromises U.S. foreign policy interests and is grounds for preventing admission into the country.⁵ The law requires that the Secretary provide certification of that determination to Congress.⁶

We write to request that you respond to the following questions no later than April 22, 2025:

1. Has Secretary Rubio made the personal determination that Mr. Mahdawi's speech compromises a compelling U.S. foreign policy interest?
2. Do you intend to provide certification to the relevant Congressional committees of the determination of whether and how Mr. Mahdawi's speech compromises a compelling U.S. foreign policy interest?
3. What reasonable grounds, including specific evidence, did DHS or the State Department have to conclude that Mr. Mahdawi's presence or activities in the United State have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States?
4. Is it the policy of DHS to engage in immigration enforcement activity under the pretense of citizenship interviews or other routine immigration processing related matters?

It is Mr. Mahdawi's right as a legal resident of the United States to argue for what he believes in. This most fundamental of American rights is crucial to the fabric of our country, and one that America was built upon. In fact, President Trump stated at his joint address to Congress in March, "I've stopped all government censorship and brought back free speech in America." If the President was serious about protecting free speech in the United States, he would protect it for everyone, including those with whom he disagrees.

Mr. Mahdawi's arrest is immoral, inhumane, and illegal. With Mr. Mahdawi's abduction, the Trump Administration continues to degrade America's image on the global stage and descend the country further and further into authoritarianism. We profoundly oppose unlawful abductions and expect a prompt response to our questions.

Sincerely,

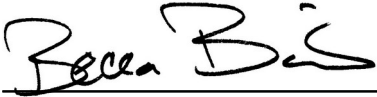
³ New York Times Co. v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254, 270 (1964) (recognizing the "profound national commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust, and wide-open.")

⁴ 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(3)(C)(iii)

⁵ Dep't of Homeland Security, Notice to Appear for Mahmoud Khalil (Mar. 9, 2025)

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/documents/8a3cbff6-4589-43e1-8455-042fa9555e3c.pdf>.

⁶ 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(3)(C)(iv)



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



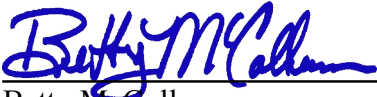
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



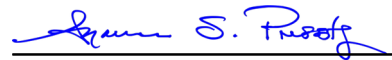
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



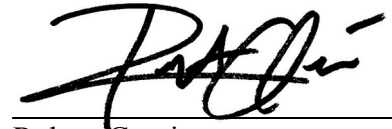
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



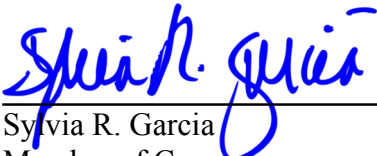
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



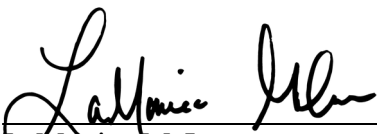
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



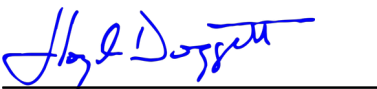
Bonnie Watson Coleman
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LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



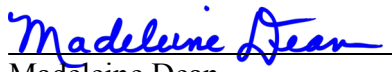
Greg Casar
Member of Congress

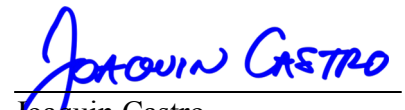



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

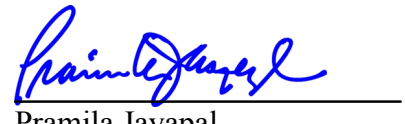


Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

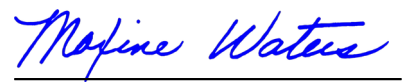

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

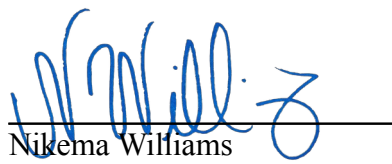

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

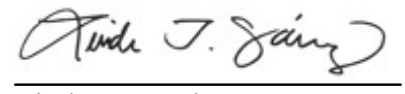

Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress


Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

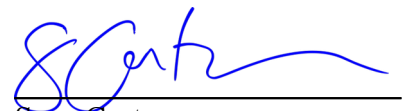

Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress

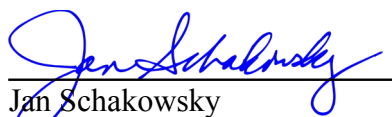

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

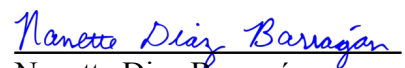

Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

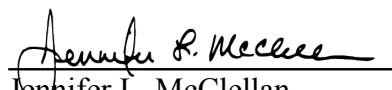

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

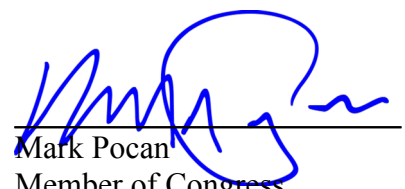

Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress


Sean Casten
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

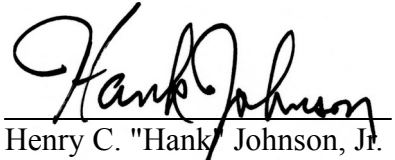

Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Jennifer L. McClellan
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Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



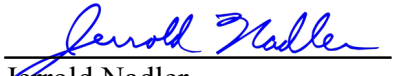
Paul D. Tonko
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



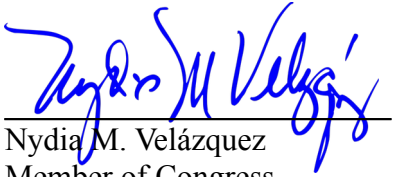
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



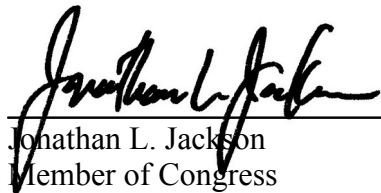
Terrold Nadler
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Chellie Pingree
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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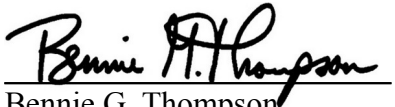
Jonathan L. Jackson
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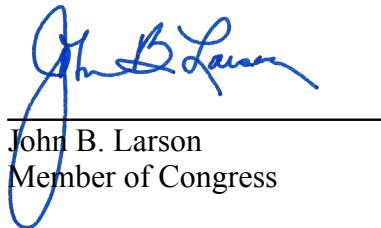
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



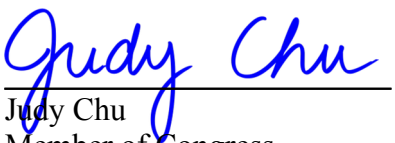
Sydney Kamlager-Dove
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Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



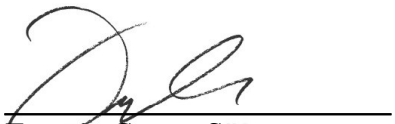
John B. Larson
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Judy Chu
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Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



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Diana DeGette
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Gwen S. Moore
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
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Ilhan Omar
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André Carson
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Sarah McBride
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Steve Cohen
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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Lateefah Simon
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Al Green
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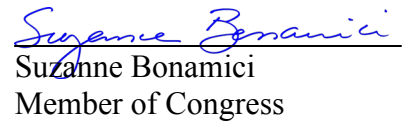


J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Maggie Goodlander
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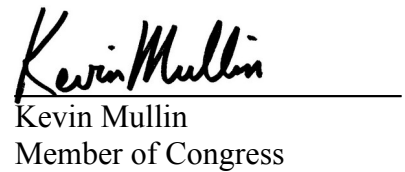

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

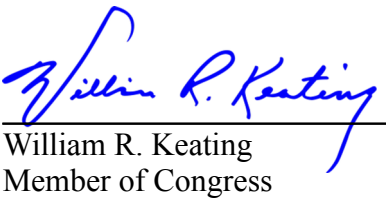

Suzanne Bonamici
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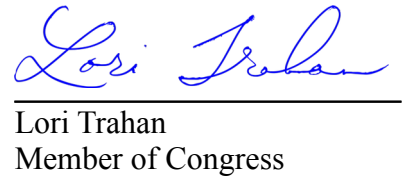

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

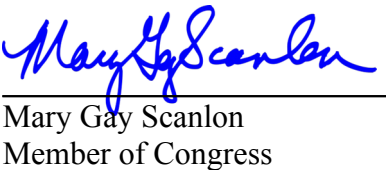

Gabe Amo
Member of Congress

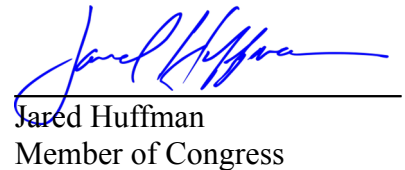

Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress

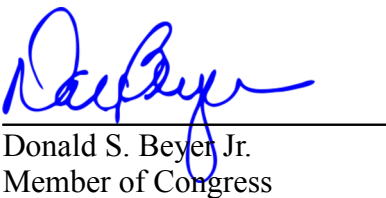

Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress

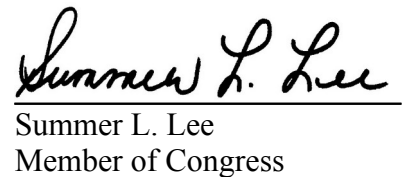

William R. Keating
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Lori Trahan
Member of Congress


Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress


Jared Huffman
Member of Congress


Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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Summer L. Lee
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