

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 23, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Rubio and Secretary Mullin:

We are writing to demand the immediate release of Franklin Humberto Coral Garrido (A-Number: 208861788), known publicly as “Beto Coral,” from U.S. government custody. He is an asylum seeker with the right to reside and work in the United States. His arrest, detention, reported treatment and possible deportation implicate at least four categories of human rights violations on the part of the U.S. government. The United States should be a defender of human rights, not an abuser.

Violation of Mr. Coral’s right to freedom of expression. The same day that Mr. Coral was arrested by agents of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Secretary Rubio issued a memo determining that he was deportable from the United States, according to the New York Times, which received a copy of the memo.¹ The memo states that “Coral Garrido has used his presence in the United States to conduct political activity in support of the Petro government.” It appears that the U.S. government is targeting Mr. Coral for his speech. This would violate both the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which applies equally to any person on U.S. soil regardless of citizenship, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),² which obligates the U.S. government to safeguard freedom of expression.

Physical abuse of Mr. Coral in detention. According to statements made by people in direct contact with Mr. Coral, while in custody of DHS personnel he was physically assaulted, placed in a water-filled confinement area, and subjected to prolonged periods without access to food or drinking water. Cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment of persons under custody or control of the U.S. government is a human rights violation and is prohibited by U.S. law, the ICCPR and the Convention Against Torture (CAT).³ Since being taken into custody, Mr. Coral has reportedly been transferred at least four times between detention facilities in Arizona, Texas and Mississippi.

Transnational repression constitutes “acts conducted or directed by a State, or its proxy, to deter, silence or punish dissent, criticism or human rights advocacy towards it, expressed from outside

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/19/us/rubio-beto-coral-colombia.html>

² ICCPR, Article 19

³ ICCPR, Articles 7 and 10, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>; CAT, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>

its territory.”⁴ Public sources strongly suggest that Abelardo De La Espriella, then a candidate and now president-elect of Colombia, had foreknowledge of the arrest of Mr. Coral. Mr. De La Espriella posted, “There will be good news for Colombia and for patriotic Colombians abroad,” on the morning of Mr. Coral’s arrest.⁵ His posts also suggest he was coordinating with the U.S., claiming he had a “list” on which the U.S. State Department could act.⁶ For the U.S. government to deprive Mr. Coral of his fundamental rights of freedom of expression and bodily integrity on U.S. soil at the request of a political actor who is seeking to become the head of state of a foreign country would constitute the abetting transnational repression by the United States and a violation of human rights.

Senator Rubio was the lead cosponsor of the Transnational Repression Policy Act,⁷ legislation to prevent the very behavior that Secretary Rubio appears to be abetting in the case of Mr. Coral.

Forced deportation (refoulement). If Mr. Coral were deported to Colombia, there is a possibility he could face torture there. The State Department’s Country Report on Human Rights Practices over several years have reported cases of torture by Colombian government officials.⁸ U.S. law and the Convention Against Torture prohibit the U.S. government from sending a person to a country where they are at risk of being subjected to torture or other cruel or inhuman treatment.⁹

On February 25, 2025, Secretary Rubio condemned “in the strongest possible terms” the refoulement by the government of Thailand of Uyghurs to the People’s Republic of China, as “inconsistent with Thailand’s commitment to protect human rights.”¹⁰ It would be height of hypocrisy, and damaging to the moral credibility of the U.S. to deter future acts of refoulement to China, if the U.S. government were to engage in the same behavior that the Secretary of State condemns of others.

Again, we ask in the strongest possible terms that Mr. Coral be allowed to remain in the United States with his family in order to have his asylum request adjudicated, and that he be given human rights protections that have been denied to him so far.

The United States government has consistently criticized foreign governments, such as those in China, Nicaragua and Russia, for engaging in human rights violations including punishing people for exercising the right to freedom of expression, abuses of detainees, transnational repression, and refoulement. The U.S. government should absolutely never be in a position of engaging in the same human rights-abusing behavior we criticize in China, Nicaragua and Russia. To do so would not only undermine our moral authority to call out such abuses in other

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/transnational-repression-1-en.pdf>

⁵ <https://x.com/ABDELAESPRIELLA/status/2066875419698102556?s=20>

⁶ <https://x.com/ABDELAESPRIELLA/status/2062615555320733717?lang=en>;
<https://x.com/ABDELAESPRIELLA/status/2067643699010388074?s=20>

⁷ S. 831, 118th Congress

⁸ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/colombia/>;
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/colombia/>

⁹ CAT, Article 3, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>

¹⁰ <https://th.usembassy.gov/on-thailands-forced-return-of-uyghurs-to-china/>

countries but represent a dereliction of duty to the Americans who depend on their government to protect their fundamental human rights under U.S. and international law.

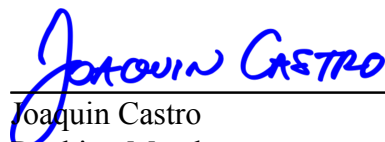
Again, the United States should be a defender of human rights, not an abuser.

Thank you for your urgent consideration of this request to release Mr. Coral.

Sincerely,



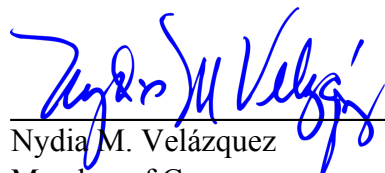
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, TLHRC



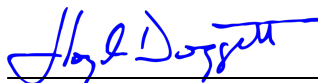
Joaquin Castro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Western
Hemisphere
House Committee on Foreign
Affairs



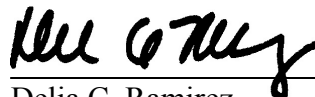
Adelita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



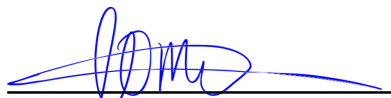
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



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

Rashida Tlaib

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress