

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 31, 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:

Between March and April 2025, the U.S. government secretly transported approximately 30 to 40 Salvadorans, alongside more than 200 Venezuelans to El Salvador's Center for Terrorism and Confinement ("CECOT"). We are concerned that a number of these individuals sent to El Salvador may have been subject to invalid deportation orders, making their deportations illegal acts.

We are extremely concerned the U.S. government has denied these individuals the right to challenge these deportations and detentions. As Members of Congress, it is our moral and official duty to ensure that the United States does not violate international human rights standards by ensuring transparency and accounting of official U.S. acts. For this reason, we write to request the release of the names, nationalities, and immigration file numbers of every individual from these deportation flights still held incommunicado in CECOT and in other prisons.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) press office regularly releases mugshots, names, and allegations of criminal conduct of people deported from the United States. The group deported to El Salvador remains a notable exception. The full list of passengers on the March and April flights to El Salvador has never been made public. Congress, the public, and families only know of a handful of names through media reports, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights filings, and one White House press release.¹

The continued concealment of the identities of these Salvadoran men conflicts with international norms prohibiting arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. Under international law frameworks, nation states are required to maintain and make accessible records of detained persons.² This is a vital safeguard against abuses and in protection of the right to life, liberty, and recognition before the law. Moreover, the right of families to know the fate and whereabouts of detained relatives is widely recognized as a fundamental human right. Concealment of identities has been condemned by international tribunals and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights as facilitating inhumane treatment and obstruction of justice.³

¹ The White House, "No Safe Harbor for Illegal Immigrant Criminals Under President Trump," April 14, 2025 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/04/no-safe-harbor-for-illegal-immigrant-criminals-under-president-trump/>; John Hudson, Jeremy Roebuck, and Samantha Schmidt, "[Rubio Promised to betray U.S. informants to get Trump's El Salvador prison deal](#)," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 2025 (accessed on November 12, 2025); Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Resolution 69/2025, Precautionary Measure No. 1101-25, Irvin Jeovanny Quintanilla García regarding El Salvador, October 2, 2025, https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/mc/2025/res_69-25_mc_1101-25_sv_en.pdf (accessed October 21, 2025).

² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): Articles 9 and 10 guarantee the right to liberty and humane treatment when deprived of their liberty. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

³ UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), General Comment on the Right to the Truth in Relation to Enforced Disappearance (2010): recognizes the right of families to "know the fate and whereabouts" of disappeared persons as a customary norm of international law. No. 136 5 UN Doc. A/HRC/16/48, comments 39-42

There are credible allegations of gross violations of human rights at CECOT.⁴ Payments made by the U.S. to El Salvador for the transfer of prisoners to CECOT is likely unlawful. Section 2378d of Title 22, referred to as the State Department “Leahy law,” prohibits otherwise authorized U.S. assistance to “any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.”⁵ A full accounting of the individuals sent to CECOT and other prisons is a necessary component of any investigation into the violations of individual rights and U.S. laws such as the Leahy law.

U.S. immigration and privacy laws include provisions to prevent violations of other laws, including human rights abuses. While the Privacy Act of 1974 requires federal agencies to protect against unauthorized disclosure of personally identifiable information (PII) such as an individual’s name and Alien file number (“A-number”), exceptions exist.⁶ A routine exception is that a federal agency may share PII to either House of Congress, any Congressional committee, subcommittee, joint committee, or subcommittee of a joint committee, if the matter is within its jurisdiction.⁷ Less common is an exception allowing for disclosure if a person makes a showing of a compelling circumstance affecting the health or safety of an individual, if upon such disclosure notification is transmitted to the last known address of such an individual.⁸ Given the incommunicado status of these individuals and the life-threatening conditions present at CECOT, this exception is clearly warranted.

Lastly, if there is a claim of a national security concern regarding the release of the identities and A-file numbers of these men, then the government should be required to offer up this reasoning for withholding their information. The fact that the White House has already published some of these names suggests such a claim would likely be unsuccessful.⁹ Additionally, if any of these men held foreign intelligence information, one questions why they were removed from the U.S. And as noted above, some of these names are already part of the public domain due to prior disclosures. Once disclosed and preserved in a permanent public record, these names no longer carry the same “protective cloak”.¹⁰

Family members of those sent to CECOT and other prisons are unable to ascertain information about the health and status of their loved ones, much less if they remain at the prison. Without A-numbers, they are not able to advocate on behalf of their loved ones or assist them in challenging their detentions. If any have died in CECOT,¹¹ their families should be given the opportunity to mourn them.

The U.S. government’s refusal to provide information about these individuals to Congress, the public, and especially their families, amounts to acts of enforced disappearance, a human rights violation under international law. Whether their names are part of the public record or not, all the men who the U.S. government deported to El Salvador deserve due process and equitable treatment, regardless of any criminal misconduct or deportation orders in their past.

⁴ [“You Have Arrived in Hell”: Torture and Other Abuses Against Venezuelans in El Salvador’s Mega Prison | HRW](#); The Daily Podcast, [Trump Sent Them to a Notorious Prison. Torture Followed. - The New York Times](#)

⁵ 22 U.S.C. § 2378d; Ariana Figueroa, Experts: \$6 million payment to Salvadoran prison likely violates US human rights law, News from the States (Apr. 14, 2025), <https://www.newsfromthestates.com/article/us-human-rights-law-likely-violated6m-payment-el-salvador-prison-experts-say>.

⁶ Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a); *see also* Meghan M. Stuessy, [“The Privacy Act of 1974: Overview and Issues for Congress,”](#) Congressional Research Service, December 7, 2023.

⁷ 5 U.S.C § 552(b)(9).

⁸ 5 U.S.C § 552(b)(8).

⁹ The White House, “No Safe Harbor for Illegal Immigrant Criminals Under President Trump,” April 14, 2025 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/04/no-safe-harbor-for-illegal-immigrant-criminals-under-president-trump/>.

¹⁰ *Cotton v. Reno*, 193 F.3d 550, 554 (D.C. Cir. 1999).

¹¹ [Inmates in El Salvador tortured and strangled: A report denounces hellish conditions in Bukele’s prisons | International | EL PAÍS English; Venezuelans describe being beaten, sexually assaulted and told to 'commit suicide' during El Salvador detention](#)

The fact that these men are, presumably, currently in the territory of El Salvador does not obviate the U.S. government from its responsibility in this matter. We are not asking for information held by the Salvadoran government. We are asking for information that the U.S. government has regarding these individuals given the fact that they were under control of the U.S. government for a period of time.

As a matter of morality and adherence to United States law and international human rights standards, we request the release of the names, nationalities, and immigration file numbers of every individual still held incommunicado in CECOT and other prisons from these deportation flights.

Sincerely,



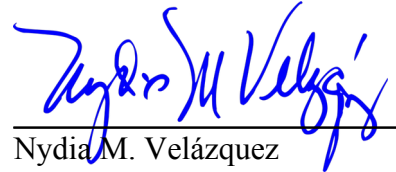
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



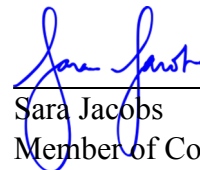
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress




Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



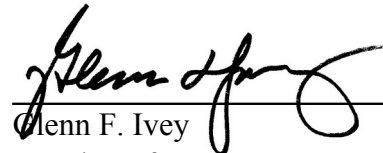
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



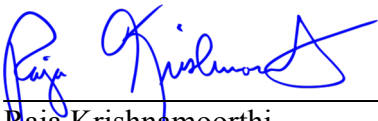
Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



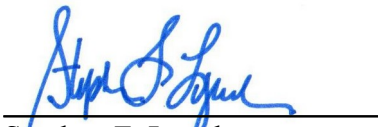
Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress



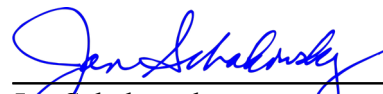
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress




Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress




Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress