

# Michigan father receives unusual waiver from deportation

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Yousef Ajin, 48, a Jordanian working class immigrant who has lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan for 18 years, received a waiver from deportation at the conclusion of a deportation hearing Tuesday. Ajin, a maintenance worker, was arrested on January 30 following a routine check-in with his immigration officer.

Ajin won wide support for his case, with over 200 people attending the protest in front of the courthouse and official statements from local politicians in Ann Arbor.

Admitting that very few waivers are ever granted, US Immigration Judge David Paruch said Ajin's family would experience extreme hardship if he were deported.

Paruch asked Ajin and his wife, Sihem Omar, what would happen if Ajin were deported and who would care for their disabled son, according to news reports. One of the four children in the family is a severely disabled 14-year-old who is unable to speak and requires around-the-clock care.

Omar was the child's full-time caregiver until Ajin was arrested at the end of January, at which point the family was without an income and she was forced to take a job. She testified at the hearing that Ajin was the main provider for the family, and his deportation would cause enormous financial hardship.

At the conclusion of the two-hour hearing, Paruch ruled in Ajin's favor. "Your offenses were long ago and your family would suffer hardship. If you are back here, things change. Your likelihood of getting a waiver is way down. You don't want to test this again."

Ajin gratefully thanked the judge, telling him, "I will not. I'm not crazy." He testified live-stream from a jail in Battle Creek, Michigan, 120 miles from Detroit where the hearing took place.

Every other Monday for many years Ajin had made the long drive from Ann Arbor to Kalamazoo in order to check in with immigration officials. On January 30, he was detained.

"When the officer called me, he said, 'You don't have to get him a lawyer or anything, he will be okay. They just want to teach him a lesson,'" his wife explained to the *Communicator*. She quickly discovered this was not the case, as Ajin was transferred to the Calhoun County Jail nearly 80 miles away.

Ajin's legal offenses took place in 2001 and 2003, each small and non-violent. In the first incident he found a wallet where he worked at a hospital, picked it up and used a credit card in it to purchase beer, cigarettes and cologne. For that offense, he received probation and paid a \$1,500 fine.

The second incident in 2003, to which he plead guilty, involved using an express lane scanner and only paying for some of the items he picked up.

What was unusual about this case was the support Ajin received from major figures in the Democratic Party in Ann Arbor. The city's mayor, Christopher Taylor, issued a statement of support on Facebook and urged citizens to join the protest. Ann Arbor Public Schools Superintendent Jeanice Swift stated on Facebook that the "threatened deportation devastates an Ann Arbor family, an American family. Our country should be better than this." Democratic State Representative Yousef Rabhi of Ann Arbor reported on Facebook that he and Democratic State Representative Adam Femke sent letters of support to the judge.

Paruch, a staunch Democrat, was appointed by Obama to the bench in 2010 and his wife was the former Democratic mayor of Royal Oak, Michigan.

The Ajin decision exposes the arbitrariness of the immigration cases that are being brought before the courts. Reports have stated that there were 950,062 individuals with final orders for removal on ICE's national docket, in other words, nearly 1 million people with some sort of criminal record which makes them liable for deportation under Trump's new policies.

Previously, 939,056 of these cases, 98 percent, were designated as “non-detain” because of the minor nature of their infractions.

According to ICE’s web site, once someone is in the system they never get out: “Every case, whether ‘detained’ or ‘non-detained,’ remains part of ERO’s (Enforcement and Removal Operations) caseload and is actively managed until it is formally closed.”

ICE spokesperson Rachel Yong Yow issued a statement justifying Yousef’s detention stating, “ERO determined Ajin to be non-compliant with the requirements of his release as provided and was taken into ERO custody.” This was in direct contradiction to the actual facts of the matter, as Ajin was in regular contact with the authorities.

The WSWS spoke to a contingent of students from Community High School, where Ajin’s daughter is a sophomore, who attended the rally in his defense Tuesday.

Jonah told the WSWS, “I hear about this stuff happening all over the country. And when it happens in our community I felt it was time we got together and said something about it, especially in Ann Arbor.

“The fact that this is happening to someone I know personally is just not acceptable.”

Kegan, a fellow student, agreed. “It is not shocking, but it is disappointing. This is supposed to be the land of the free, but they are throwing out people with a different origin, for basically no sound reason at all.”

Another student added, “They are trying to say that immigrants are taking jobs, which is not true and has been disproven.” Jonah agreed: “It is blaming our problems on a group of people to take the blame off our government.”

Another Community High student said that her own father had been deported to Mexico and they attempted to deport her mother. “And this took place under Obama,” she added. “This has been going on for some time.”



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