“I begged them! I said ‘Please, I’ve never seen this country!’”

Detroit man dies after ICE deports him to Iraq

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On August 6, Jimmy Aldaoud of Detroit was found dead on the floor of an apartment over 6,000 miles away in Baghdad, apparently after a diabetic shock.

He had arrived in Iraq for the first time in his life just two months ago with almost nothing but a small amount of insulin and 50 US dollars. He spoke no Arabic, knew literally no one in Iraq, and had begged ICE officers not to send him there.

Aldaoud, 41, had lived virtually his entire life in the United States. He was born in 1978 in Greece to Iraqi refugee parents who brought him to the United States as an infant. They were Chaldean, a persecuted Christian minority in Iraq. Both parents later died. Jimmy spent most of his adult life homeless or squatting in abandoned homes in the Detroit area.

He suffered from diabetes and severe mental illness. ICE deported him to Iraq anyway, where he lived a nightmare for two months and then died.

“The [US] government knew that with all the factors involved, sending Jimmy to Iraq was a death sentence,” Aldaoud’s lawyer, Edward Bajoka, told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “ICE attorneys actively argued that Iraq was safe for him, despite the fact that he had never been there and did not speak the language. His blood is on the hands of ICE and the [Trump] administration.”

“My name is Jimmy Aldaoud. I was deported two-and-a-half weeks ago,” Jimmy said in a harrowing video statement posted to Facebook this week. “I’ve been in the United States since six months old. Two-and-a-half weeks ago, immigration agents pulled me over and said I’m going to Iraq. I refused. I said I’ve lived in this country my whole life, since pretty much birth. They refused to listen to me...”

He continued:

> They wouldn’t let me call my family. They just said you’re going to Iraq, and your best bet is to cooperate with us. That way we won’t chain you up. We’re going to put you on a commercial flight. I begged them. I said ‘Please, I’ve never seen that country, I’ve never been there.’ However, they forced me.
>
> I’m here now. I don’t understand the language. I’ve been sleeping in the street. I’m diabetic. I take insulin shots. I’ve been throwing up, throwing up, sleeping in the street, and trying to find something to eat. I’ve got nothing over here, as you can see. I was kicked in the back a couple of days ago by a man claiming it was his property. I was sleeping on the ground. I begged them [ICE]. I said ‘Please sir, I’ve never seen this country, I don’t understand the language, nobody understands English...
>
> [The video abruptly ends there.]

Jimmy had the status of “lawful permanent resident,” that is, he had a Green Card, which is afforded to all those granted asylum in the US. However, this status can be revoked for innumerable reasons, including conviction for petty crimes. Jimmy had been convicted of many small acts of theft and other offenses associated with extreme poverty.

In June 2017, he was arrested for lying to a police officer and taken to the Oakland County jail in the suburbs of Detroit. ICE agents placed a “detainer” on him while he was at the jail, picked him up directly upon release, and detained him 200 miles away at the

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Northeast Ohio Correctional Center in Youngstown, Ohio.

This was part of a sweep initiated by the newly inaugurated Trump administration to target Iraqis and people from other “shithole” countries. Over 200 other Chaldeans in the Detroit area were also detained in the sweep.

Metro Detroit is home to the world’s largest population of Chaldeans outside of Iraq, some 160,000 people. Many Chaldeans cite the threat of torture or murder by the Iraqi state or militias in their asylum applications.

In December 2018, ICE released Aldaoud from detention with a GPS tracker while he awaited deportation proceedings. He removed the tracker.

ICE picked him up again on the street in late May of this year and deported him to Najaf, Iraq. Jimmy and his US-citizen sisters explained to the *Intercept* reporters who had been investigating the story before he died that ICE agents refused to allow him to call his family for help. Only upon arriving at customs in Najaf was he able to borrow a phone and reach his sister Mary in Detroit.

The *Intercept* reports that Mary contacted the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and through them she was able to put Jimmy in touch with another Chaldean deportee living in Baghdad, who attempted to help Jimmy get access to insulin and shelter. Jimmy died when the man had to leave the country for a medical procedure.

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