

“Trump is attempting to detain me to prevent me from having my day in court.”

Police sought to detain Momodou Taal after he filed lawsuit against Trump administration in defense of free speech

Jacob Crosse
19 March 2025

The Trump administration is seeking to intimidate, detain and possibly deport Momodou Taal, a Cornell University PhD student and British-Gambian citizen legally residing in the United States, for daring to file a lawsuit seeking to repeal Trump’s executive orders criminalizing speech and dissent.

On his X social media account Wednesday, Taal reported that “law enforcement from an unidentified agency came to my home in Ithaca, New York.” Appealing to the broader population to defend democratic rights, Taal said, “I believe they planned to detain me and appeal to you to come to my defense.”

Taal noted that the unidentified police arrived “shortly after a federal judge scheduled a hearing in my lawsuit demanding the courts strike down Trump’s executive orders attacking free speech.”

Taal, an outspoken opponent of the genocide in Gaza, along with Professor M?koma Wa Ng?g? and student Sriram Parasurama, filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration last week which challenged Executive Order 14161, “Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats,” and Executive Order 14188, “Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism.” Both executive orders seek to block and suppress any speech critical of the Trump administration, Israel and the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The lawsuit, filed by attorney Eric Lee and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), stated: “Only in a dictatorship can the leader jail and banish political opponents for criticizing his administration.”

The first hearing on the lawsuit was scheduled to take place on March 19 at 2:00 p.m. before US District Judge Elizabeth C. Coombe. Roughly an hour before the hearing

was scheduled to begin, Judge Coombe canceled the hearing and rescheduled it to an in-person hearing on Tuesday, March 25, at 2:00 p.m. in Syracuse, New York. Coombe also ordered both parties to present their written arguments prior to Tuesday’s hearing.

Roughly four hours before the March 19 hearing was slated to begin, Taal wrote:

At about 10 AM, two eyewitnesses confronted an unfamiliar vehicle and the officer inside flashed a badge quickly, as though he did not want us to know what agency he was from. Later in the day other Cornell students saw additional law enforcement cars positioned at various points near my residence, including on campus.

He added,

Trump is attempting to detain me to prevent me from having my day in court. Trump does not want me to present my argument challenging his actions. This is part of a continued pattern in the Trump administration’s flagrant disregard for the judiciary.

Taal concluded:

I am undeterred in my commitment and seeing this

through. The images in Gaza are horrifying and only strengthen my resolve to do whatever we can. Free Palestine.

Lead attorney Eric Lee condemned the Trump administration's attempts to threaten his client, writing on X:

In a democracy, law enforcement does not show up at your house (in force) days after you file a lawsuit against the president.

The intensification of attacks on immigrants and opponents of genocide under the Trump administration is only possible because of the complicity of the Democratic Party, which under President Biden oversaw the campaign to slander all opposition to the Zionist regime as "antisemitism."

Under the Biden administration last year, Taal was threatened with suspension and revocation of his F-1 student visa for peacefully participating in anti-genocide protests on campus. The *World Socialist Web Site*, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality and the Socialist Equality Party mounted a vigorous campaign in defense of Taal and all democratic rights in the US and around the world.

The latest threats against Taal come in the midst of an avalanche of injustices perpetrated by the US immigration Gestapo since Trump's inauguration on January 20. On March 8, Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University graduate student and legal US resident, was abducted from his home by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agents, who refused to provide a warrant or justification for his arrest. Khalil, who is married to a US citizen and expecting the birth of their first child in April, remains imprisoned in an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) hellhole in Louisiana.

On Wednesday, *Politico* reported that Badar Khan Suri, a Georgetown University researcher legally residing in the United States, was arrested by "masked agents" outside his home in Rosslyn, Virginia, on Monday night. According to a lawsuit filed by his lawyer, Hassan Ahmad, the government is trying to deport Suri under the same provision in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 that grants Secretary of State Marco Rubio authority to deport someone if they pose a threat to "national security."

As is the case with Khalil, according to Ahmad, Suri has not committed a crime but is being targeted because his

wife, a US citizen, is of Palestinian descent and the US government suspects that the couple opposes the genocide in Gaza.

Speaking to *Politico*, Ahmad noted he has had zero communication with his client since he was abducted. "We're trying to speak with him. That hasn't happened yet," he told the outlet. "This is just another example of our government abducting people the same way they abducted Khalil."

As of Wednesday, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) immigrant locator listed Suri at the Alexandria staging facility in Louisiana.

Conditions inside immigrant detention facilities are notoriously abhorrent. Jasmine Mooney, a Canadian actress, recounted her recent kidnapping and imprisonment by ICE in an article published by *The Guardian* on Wednesday. She was detained at the US border in San Diego while traveling from Mexico, on her way to Los Angeles, California. She had a valid work visa.

Mooney, like the other 140 women with whom she was imprisoned, had committed no crime. This did not prevent ICE thugs from jailing her for two weeks without access to a lawyer. Mooney noted that her situation was not unique, and that, in fact, "every woman I met was in an even more difficult position than mine."

She recounted meeting a woman who was on a road trip with her husband, both of whom had 10-year work visas. But after mistakenly driving in the wrong lane near the San Diego border towards Mexico, both were detained.

Mooney recounted that the women in the facility with her

had been picked up off the street, from outside their workplaces, from their homes. All of these women told me that they had been detained for time spans ranging from a few weeks to 10 months.

Mooney was able to secure her release after two weeks when her detention made international news.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact