

# Judge rules to move Mahmoud Khalil's immigration case from New York to New Jersey

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On Wednesday, Judge Jesse Furman of the Southern District of New York transferred Mahmoud Khalil's case to New Jersey, where the 30-year-old Columbia University graduate student and legal US resident was immediately taken following his kidnapping on March 8.

Khalil has been targeted for deportation by the Trump administration for his role as lead negotiator for students with the Columbia administration during the anti-genocide encampment movement last spring. Khalil has not been charged with a crime, but this has not prevented the Trump administration and Secretary of State Marco Rubio from imprisoning and attempting to deport him for speaking out against the genocide in Gaza.

Yesterday, in his first public statement since being abducted by the Trump administration, Khalil denounced both big business parties and the Columbia administration for facilitating the genocide and ongoing attacks on democratic rights.

"My unjust detention is indicative of the anti-Palestinian racism that both the Biden and Trump administrations have demonstrated over the past 16 months as the U.S. has continued to supply Israel with weapons to kill Palestinians," Khalil wrote. He concluded his statement with a warning that attempts to imprison and deport him threatened "the fundamental civil liberties of all."

In Wednesday's order, Judge Furman ruled that his temporary restraining order preventing Khalil's deportation remains in effect until and unless a district judge in New Jersey rules otherwise. For now, Khalil remains imprisoned in an ICE detention facility in Jena, Louisiana, over 1,300 miles from his American wife,

who is 8 ½ months pregnant with their first child. His next court hearing before an immigration judge is currently scheduled for March 27 at 8:30 a.m.

In his ruling, Furman noted that it was an "undisputed fact that Khalil was detained in the District of New Jersey at the time his lawyer filed the Petition; this court lacks jurisdiction over most, if not all, of Khalil's claims."

The Trump administration had sought to move Khalil's case to Louisiana. As the *New York Times* reported, there it would

most likely be appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which presides over federal court cases that come from Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi.

It is one of the country's most conservative appeals courts. Most of its judges were nominated by Republican presidents, including six by President Trump during his first term.

Speaking to the *Times*, Steve Vladeck, a professor at Georgetown University, said that the Fifth Circuit "is the court I'd least want to be in if I were Khalil." He added:

It is a court where immigrants in general have a historically poor track record, and it's a court in which judges are going to be most sympathetic to the government's ability to point at someone and say, "You supported Hamas."

In an interview with *DropSite News*, Amy Greer, one of Khalil's lawyers, said it was "important" that Judge Furman "did not transfer the case to Louisiana, which would be away from his entire legal team and would just put the case in a very different situation."

While Khalil's lawyers had sought to move the case to New York, Greer acknowledged that regardless of the judge's ruling, the Trump administration has already violated court orders. "We can't operate in a vacuum here thinking that the rule of law will insulate us completely," she told *DropSite*. "The public support [for Khalil], that's all we can rely on right now."

She concluded, "I think what happens with this case is a true bellwether to whether or not we as Americans want to preserve our right to speech and expression and association, or whether we're going to let this administration roll back those rights."

On Wednesday, socialist autoworker and 2022 candidate for United Auto Workers president, Will Lehman released a video statement calling on rank-and-file workers, inside and outside the union, to take action to demand Khalil's release and stop the assault on democratic rights.

I call on UAW members in every plant and workplace: Discuss Khalil's case. Form rank-and-file committees to fight for his freedom. This fight is not just about one worker. It's about mobilizing the entire working class against the capitalist system, the source of war and dictatorship. It's about taking power from the oligarchs and putting it in the hands of workers.



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