

Oppose the attack on Momodou Taal, the latest target of Trump's assault on democratic rights!

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Over the past week, the Trump administration has dramatically intensified its implementation of a presidential dictatorship. It has seized and detained individuals for exercising their First Amendment rights, invoked the reactionary Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to deport hundreds of immigrants without due process, and openly defied judicial rulings against these actions.

Cornell University student Momodou Taal, a British-Gambian student at Cornell, is the latest target of this vicious campaign of political intimidation and repression.

On Friday, Justice Department lawyers issued a formal demand via email that Taal "voluntarily surrender" himself into Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody for deportation. This was a direct response to a lawsuit Taal filed challenging Trump's executive orders as unconstitutional violations of free speech, as well as a request for a temporary restraining order seeking to block the government from seizing and deporting him in response to the case.

That is, the president, in response to a court case against him, is attempting to kidnap, detain and remove from the country the individual who filed the case. Taal holds a valid student visa, has committed no crime, and has not been provided with any lawful justification for his detention or deportation.

Taal, along with fellow Cornell student Sriram Parasurama and Professor M?koma Wa Ng?g?, filed the lawsuit one week ago, on March 15. It is the first significant legal case against the executive orders, proclaimed on Trump's first day in office, that the administration has invoked to justify the kidnapping of Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil and other students who oppose the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The suit charges that these orders flagrantly violate the First and Fifth Amendments by suppressing free speech, criminalizing political opposition and threatening critics of US and Israeli policy with deportation or prosecution. "Only in a dictatorship can the leader jail and banish political opponents for criticizing his administration," the filing states.

Four days after the filing, on Wednesday, Taal reported that unidentified law enforcement agents had staked out his home in Ithaca, evidently preparing to arrest him. In response to this stalking and intimidation, Taal's lawyers filed an emergency request for a temporary restraining order (TRO) to block his arrest and detention.

In response, in the dead of night, at 12:52 a.m. on March 21, Taal's attorneys received the email from the Justice Department. The letter, from Ethan Kanter of the Department of Justice's Office of Immigration Litigation, states that ICE "invites Mr. Taal and his counsel to appear in-person at the HSI Office in Syracuse at a mutually agreeable time for personal service of the NTA [notice to appear] and for Mr. Taal to surrender to ICE custody."

Significantly, the subject of the email references the case filed against the Trump administration, *Momodou Taal et al v. Trump*, 25-cv-335 (NDNY). That is, the Justice Department acknowledges that the demand for Taal to turn himself in is in response to the court case filed against Trump himself. An emergency filing to the court from Taal's lawyers on Friday afternoon notes that the action "also constitutes an unlawful attempt to remove this Court's jurisdiction over this case," by removing the plaintiff from the country.

Taal's attorney, Eric Lee, told the *World Socialist*

Web Site, “Attorneys from the so-called Justice Department issued this demand to Taal’s legal team just hours after we had specifically requested the court to prevent them from doing exactly that.

“In a democracy, the president doesn’t arrest individuals who sue challenging the constitutionality of executive orders. This strikes at core democratic principles: The right to criticize the government and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances. Without these, the Bill of Rights is dead letter.”

The administration’s targeting of Taal coincides with ICE agents’ kidnapping and detention of Mahmoud Khalil, as well as Georgetown University researcher Badar Khan Suri, who was detained by masked federal agents outside his home earlier this week. Both have been seized on the grounds that their positions in opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza are a threat to US “national security.”

Operating on the basis of the fascist theory of the “State of Exception,” the Trump administration is carrying out a deliberate and systematic plan to establish a presidential dictatorship. Each violation of democratic norms sets the stage for even more severe and far-reaching attacks.

All of this is occurring amidst a dramatic escalation of imperialist violence in the Middle East. The genocide in Gaza, which has already claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands, is ongoing, with hundreds murdered this week alone. At the same time, the White House initiated a massive bombing campaign this week against Yemen, targeting civilian infrastructure and deepening the humanitarian catastrophe in one of the world’s poorest countries.

The implementation of the administration’s conspiracy for dictatorship is targeted above all at the working class. This is a government of, by and for the capitalist oligarchy, which is waging a brutal war on every social program and right of workers.

On Thursday, Trump signed an executive order directing Education Secretary Linda McMahon to take steps toward dismantling the Department of Education, having already terminated half of its workforce. Public education as a whole is being dismantled. Simultaneously, the administration is preparing historic cuts to Social Security, Medicaid and food stamps, while gutting all federal agencies providing vital social

services.

The Democratic Party is not opposing this assault, but instead has facilitated it. Exactly one week ago, Senate Democrats provided the decisive votes to ensure passage of a Republican spending bill fully funding the Trump administration for six months. The *World Socialist Web Site* characterized this bill as the Democrats’ Enabling Act, writing on March 15, “The Democrats have handed Trump and Elon Musk a blank check to slash social programs, purge federal employees and lay the groundwork for a police state.” This is now unfolding.

The working class must intervene as an independent force to stop this bipartisan conspiracy to overthrow all social and democratic rights. The turn of the oligarchy toward fascism will not be stopped through the courts or the Democratic Party.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the mobilization of workers throughout the country to defend Momodou Taal, Mahmoud Khalil and all others facing persecution by the Trump administration. Demonstrations, rallies and workplace actions must be organized to stop the assault on democratic rights.

Rank-and-file committees must be built in workplaces, campuses, and neighborhoods—independent of the pro-corporate trade union apparatus—to mobilize workers against Trump’s dictatorship and the corporate assault on their livelihoods. The development of a mass movement of the working class against dictatorship must be infused and led by a socialist program, to expropriate the wealth of the oligarchs and end their economic dictatorship over social and economic life.

Fill out the form below for information on joining the SEP and to organize protests and other actions at your school or workplace.



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