

Amended lawsuit filed over illegal deportation of Dr. Rasha Alawieh by US border control

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12 May 2025

Lawyers for a Rhode Island hospital kidney doctor (nephrologist) filed an amended lawsuit last week challenging her illegal deportation to Lebanon by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents at Boston Logan International Airport.

Dr. Rasha Alawieh, 34, who is also a professor at Brown University's medical school, was detained for 36 hours at Boston Logan International Airport and deported on March 14. According to the lawsuit, she was returning from a visit to her family in Lebanon and held a valid visa at the time.

Despite holding a valid H1-B visa to work at the hospital—and a court order expressly prohibiting her removal—Dr. Alawieh was deported without any due process. The lawsuit was initially filed in response to her unlawful detention.

The amended lawsuit states that the CBP officers involved were never appointed by the president or the head of any federal department to make the type of determinations they did. “They exercised unilateral and administratively unreviewable authority to refuse to let Dr. Alawieh enter the country,” the filing asserts. As a result, her visa was canceled and she was issued a five-year ban from re-entering the United States. The lawsuit contends that “these assertions of sovereign authority violate the Appointments Clause” and further challenges the legality of her “expedited” deportation.

Dr. Alawieh is one of only three nephrologists specializing in kidney transplants in the entire state of Rhode Island. Her removal, as her colleagues and legal team have argued, will significantly harm public health by depriving patients of lifesaving care and reducing the number of specialists available to provide critical medical training.

Dr. Paul Morrissey, director of Brown University's transplant program, told local news, “We never had an

issue with her in any way. She's an outstanding physician, outstanding person. She's a pleasure to work with, and we're horrified by this entire event.”

Dr. Alawieh has lived in the United States since 2018, when she arrived on a J-1 visa to pursue medical training, completing her program at Yale in June 2024. The CBP's claim that she presents a threat is an absurd and baseless lie.

The judge issued a second order following Alawieh's deportation, stating there was reason to believe CPB had willfully disobeyed the court's directive. This blatant defiance echoes similar violations under the Trump administration, such as the deportation of immigrants to El Salvador in open contempt of judicial orders. Such actions directly contravene the Constitution, which guarantees rights to all individuals within the United States, not just citizens.

The implication of disregarding these protections is chilling: anyone could be declared a non-citizen and stripped of their rights. Without due process, there is no mechanism to challenge or stop such abuses.

The independent judiciary, enshrined in the Constitution to prevent the return of arbitrary rule by monarchs, is increasingly being supplanted by executive fiat—that is, by dictatorship.

The Trump administration claims it deported Dr. Alawieh for allegedly attending the funeral of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon, where she grew up. The Department of Homeland Security asserts that she admitted to attending the funeral, though it has provided no evidence to substantiate this claim. The funeral itself drew between 500,000 and 1.4 million attendees. DHS further alleges that photos of Nasrallah were found on her phone.

Even if it were true, there isn't anything illegal about having pictures of someone on your phone or attending

a funeral.

The hypocrisy of the Trump administration's actions is staggering. It barred Dr. Alawieh from the United States on the unproven claim that she attended the funeral of a figure linked to a group it deems "terrorist." Yet Washington has repeatedly welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—wanted by the International Court of Justice for war crimes in Gaza—to both the White House and Congress.

Netanyahu presides over a genocide that has already claimed the lives of at least 70,000 Palestinians, the majority women and children, and is likely far higher. Israel, with full support from the United States, is deliberately starving the population of Gaza. Meanwhile, Washington has bombed Lebanon, terrorized the Middle East for over three decades, and supported countless authoritarian regimes. The deportation of Dr. Alawieh has nothing to do with moral or legal principle—it is a calculated act of political repression.

In a statement celebrating Dr. Alawieh's deportation, the Trump administration declared, "A visa is a privilege, not a right." What this really means is that democratic rights—including the right to a fair trial—are to be treated as privileges, granted or revoked at the whim of Trump and his would-be dictatorship. This will be used not just against immigrants, but against all those who oppose the Trump regime and especially workers, citizens included.



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