Trump brings Abrego Garcia back to the US to face felony charges

Kevin Reed
6 June 2025

On Friday, Attorney General Pam Bondi announced the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia to the United States from El Salvador, marking the latest chapter in a protracted legal and political assault on his rights that has exposed the Trump administration's determination to criminalize and demonize immigrant workers.

Abrego Garcia, a Maryland resident and Salvadoran native, was brought back to face multiple felony charges after his illegal deportation in March, when he spent weeks at the concentration camp called the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT) before he was moved and kept in isolation in another prison.

Attorney General Bondi confirmed at a press conference that "our government presented El Salvador with an arrest warrant, and they agreed to return him to our country," emphasizing that the administration's decision to return Abrego Garcia was the result of a Tennessee grand jury indictment and not court rulings that determined his deportation was illegal in the first place.

Bondi stated that Abrego Garcia "has landed in the United States after he was deported to an El Salvador prison in March" and is now in US custody facing criminal charges. She revealed that a federal grand jury in Nashville secretly indicted Abrego Garcia last month on two felony counts: conspiracy to illegally transport undocumented immigrants for profit and the unlawful transportation of undocumented immigrants for profit.

Abrego Garcia was arrested upon his arrival back in the US, taken into federal custody and appeared in a Tennessee courtroom on the same day. Magistrate Judge Barbara Holmes of the US District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee set a hearing date of June 13 to address his arraignment and the government's motion to keep him in pretrial detention, citing that he "poses a danger to the community and a serious risk of flight." Abrego Garcia will remain in federal custody in Tennessee pending this hearing.

The indictment, unsealed on Friday, alleges that Abrego Garcia participated in a yearslong conspiracy to transport thousands of undocumented migrants—including children—across the US from Texas to the interior, in exchange for thousands of dollars. The charges stem from a 2022 traffic stop in Tennessee, when police found Abrego Garcia at the wheel of an SUV with nine other Hispanic men, all lacking identification.

At the press conference, Bondi went further, asserting, "Thousands of undocumented individuals were smuggled," and accused Abrego Garcia of "exploiting the innocence of minor children for financial gain." None of these accusations are included in the formal indictment.

According to the details in the indictment, the traffic stop involving Abrego Garcia took place on November 30, 2022, on Interstate 40 in Tennessee. Garcia was driving a Chevrolet Suburban eastbound when he was pulled over by the Tennessee Highway Patrol for speeding.

Inside the vehicle, troopers discovered eight other Hispanic men, making a total of nine occupants. None of the passengers had identification or luggage, which immediately raised suspicions among the officers.

Garcia told the troopers that he and the men had been in St. Louis for two weeks working construction. However, subsequent checks of cell phone data and license plate readers contradicted this story, revealing that Garcia had been in Texas earlier that same morning and not near St. Louis in the previous two weeks.

This discrepancy, combined with the lack of luggage and identification, led the troopers to suspect that Garcia was transporting undocumented individuals for profit. During the stop, officers found an envelope containing $1,400 in cash inside the vehicle. One trooper remarked, "He's transporting these individuals for profit," according to body camera footage.

Despite these suspicions, the officers did not arrest or

© World Socialist Web Site

charge Garcia at the time. He was issued a warning for having an expired driver's license and allowed to continue driving with his passengers. The body camera footage from the stop shows a relatively cordial exchange between Garcia and the troopers, with no evidence of criminal activity presented during the interaction.

Months later, the stop became the focal point of a federal investigation. It was cited in a grand jury indictment accusing Garcia of conspiracy to transport undocumented immigrants and unlawfully transporting them for profit. The Trump administration has repeatedly referenced the incident as evidence of alleged criminal activity, even though no charges were filed at the time of the stop.

Garcia's wife later explained that he sometimes transported groups of construction workers between job sites. His attorney emphasized that the body camera footage did not show any criminal activity and insisted that Garcia deserved his day in court.

Attorney General Bondi's public statements included accusations not found in the indictments, a hallmark of the Trump administration's political vendetta against Abrego Garcia. From the moment it became known that he was illegally deported, the White House has been painting him as a dangerous criminal and, by extension, reinforcing the administration's lie that immigrant workers are threats to the public.

The ordeal faced by Abrego Garcia is part of the Trump administration's open defiance of the judiciary. Despite a Supreme Court decision declaring his deportation illegal and ordering the White House to "facilitate" his return, the administration delayed and resisted compliance for months.

Federal Judge Paula Xinis condemned the Justice Department's "willful refusal to comply," warning of an "incipient crisis" between the executive and judicial branches. Legal experts have described this as a constitutional crisis, with the executive branch essentially defying the courts.

Throughout, the White House has repeated the false claim that Abrego Garcia is a member of MS-13, despite the lack of evidence and the fact that he has no criminal record in either the US or El Salvador. Judge Xinis noted that the government "must answer questions about who authorized Abrego Garcia's placement in a Salvadoran prison and provide evidence supporting claims that he belongs to MS-13," an allegation the judge noted remains unsubstantiated in court.

Abrego Garcia's legal team has denounced the administration's actions and underscored his right to due process. Following Bondi's press announcement, attorney Andrew Rossman stated, "It would now be up to the US judicial system to ensure he received due process." The defense has consistently disputed the gang allegations, emphasizing that Abrego Garcia has never been convicted of any crime and that the accusations are based on "flimsy evidence."

Kilmar Abrego Garcia was born in July 1995 in San Salvador, El Salvador, and immigrated to the United States in 2011 at the age of 16 to escape gang violence. In El Salvador, the Barrio 18 gang extorted his mother's business and threatened to kill him if he refused to join. After arriving in the US, he settled in Maryland, living with his brother, who became a US citizen.

He married Jennifer Vasquez Sura, also a US citizen, and together they have a child with special needs, whom they raise alongside her two children. All three children are American citizens.

Abrego Garcia was granted withholding of removal in 2019, allowing him to live and work legally in the US, and he complied with all ICE check-ins until his illegal deportation.

If convicted of the charges against him, Abrego Garcia faces a maximum of 10 years in prison for each of undocumented individual he is accused of transporting. This means that, because the alleged offenses involve transporting thousands of migrants over a period of years, his total potential sentence could amount to several lifetimes in prison. Meanwhile, Bondi made it clear that, upon completion of any prison sentence, Abrego Garcia would still be deported to El Salvador.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site