

# Fired DOJ lawyer alleges senior Justice Department officials lied to courts, ignored orders and directed subordinates to do the same

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24 June 2025

In a revealing whistleblower complaint first reported by the *New York Times* on Tuesday, Erez Reuveni, the former acting deputy director of the Office of Immigration Litigation (OIL) at the Department of Justice (DOJ), accused several senior figures in the DOJ of “knowingly and willfully” defying court orders and directing “their subordinate attorneys to make misrepresentations to courts” in order to advance Trump’s mass deportation operation.

Reuveni’s complaint is supplemented by emails and direct quotes, lending credibility to its allegations. It exposes the criminal and lawless character not only of the Trump administration but of the entire US government.

Furthermore, the complaint was not issued by an opponent of the bipartisan deportation campaign but by a 15-year employee of DOJ who had loyally argued in favor of immigration policies advanced by both Democratic and Republican administrations. As noted in the document, during the first Trump administration, Reuveni “led the defense of the Administration’s initiatives, including the Executive Orders and proclamation barring entry of certain nationalities to the United States.”

This, however, as Reuveni notes, did not prevent him from being targeted by the Trump administration, including being characterized as a “saboteur, a Democrat” by Trump’s fascist-minded White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller after Reuveni refused to lie on behalf of the government.

Reuveni said his disclosures “detail violations of law, rules or regulations, and the abuse of authority by DOJ and White House personnel, as well as the creation of substantial and specific health and safety threats to noncitizens.” He detailed three separate instances in which senior DOJ employees either directed him to present false information to the courts, presented false information themselves or advanced legal arguments that had no basis in law.

Among those accused by Reuveni of conspiring to violate court orders is Donald Trump’s nominee for a New Jersey-based judgeship on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, Emil Bove III. The Third Circuit’s jurisdiction includes New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and the US Virgin Islands.

Since he was named acting US deputy attorney general on January 20, Bove, Trump’s former defense lawyer, has quickly moved to carry out Trump’s dictatorial agenda. Under his direction, prosecutors who oversaw January 6 criminal cases were fired, while corruption charges against New York City’s Democratic Mayor Eric Adams were dropped in exchange for compliance with Trump’s lawless deportation efforts in a blatantly quid pro quo arrangement.

Reuveni claims in the complaint—filed one day before Bove is set to appear before the Senate Judiciary Committee for his confirmation hearing—that during a March 14, 2025 meeting, Bove informed him and other senior lawyers charged with defending Trump’s deportation operations in the courts that Trump planned to invoke the Alien Enemies Act (AEA). The 1798 law grants the president virtually unchecked powers to detain and deport nationals of enemy states without due process.

In the March 14 meeting, Bove said, according to Reuveni, that “one or more planes containing individuals subject to the AEA would be taking off over the weekend—meaning Saturday, March 15, and Sunday, March 16.”

Reuveni said Bove stressed to all in attendance—including Deputy Assistant Attorney General (DAAG) of OIL Drew Ensign, Counselor to the Deputy Attorney General James McHenry, Associate Deputy Attorney General (ADAG) Paul Perkins, Reuveni’s direct supervisor August Flentje, and other OIL attorneys—that the planes needed to take off “no matter what.”

Bove said that if a court order was issued blocking the

removals, the DOJ's response should be "fuck you." Reuveni said he was "stunned" by Bove's statement because, to his knowledge, no one in DOJ leadership had ever instructed employees to "blatantly ignore court orders, especially with a 'fuck you.'"

Following this meeting and until he was fired on April 11, Reuveni said he "witnessed and internally reported to his DOJ leadership multiple incidents that led him to reasonably believe the government was in violation of court orders."

In one of these instances, Reuveni alleges that he was wrongfully terminated by the DOJ for refusing to sign an appeal brief containing arguments unsupported by evidence or law. He was fired from the Justice Department on April 11, after being placed on administrative leave the previous week, following his admission in court that the US government, in what it called an "administrative error," had deported Maryland father Kilmar Abrego Garcia to El Salvador's notorious "terrorism prison" known as CECOT.

Abrego Garcia was one of hundreds of men wrongfully deported to El Salvador's CECOT on March 15, after Judge James Boasberg issued an oral order blocking the plane carrying him and others from leaving the United States.

Reuveni wrote that he "reasonably believes" DAAG Ensign knowingly made at least one false statement before Judge Boasberg on March 15. During the hearing, Boasberg asked Ensign if there were any imminent deportations or removals scheduled to El Salvador under the AEA "in the next 24 or 48 hours," to which Ensign responded, "I don't know the answer to that question."

Reuveni said this statement was false, as Ensign had been in the same meeting with Bove the previous day, during which Bove clearly stated that "one or more planes containing individuals subject to the AEA would be taking off over the weekend 'no matter what'" (emphasis in original).

Reuveni and his lawyers cited several instances in which he attempted to reach out to other agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security, to ensure compliance with Judge Boasberg's orders—only to be ignored or outright told to stop. While he was being admonished for trying to comply with Boasberg's orders, Reuveni was increasingly being asked to make false statements in court appearances.

On March 31, Reuveni said he was asked by James Percival, senior counselor to the secretary of Homeland Security, whether the government's briefs against Abrego Garcia could include "factual allegations" that Abrego Garcia was an "MS-13 leader." Reuveni responded that any such allegations would "need to be supported by evidence."

When no evidence was provided, Reuveni did not argue in an April 4 hearing before Judge Paula Xinis that Abrego Garcia was a terrorist or gang member. In that same hearing,

Reuveni acknowledged that Abrego Garcia should not have been deported to El Salvador.

Following the hearing, Reuveni claims that one of his superiors, Drew Ensign, called and demanded to know why he did not argue that Abrego Garcia was a "terrorist" and therefore his previous protection from removal to El Salvador was nullified. Reuveni replied that the government had not previously made those arguments because they were not supported by evidence, and that there is no law that nullifies a prior grant of withholding relief simply because the government accuses someone of being a "terrorist."

After refusing to sign an updated government appeal brief that nevertheless accused Abrego Garcia of being a "terrorist," Reuveni was placed on administrative leave on April 5. In a letter signed by Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche, Reuveni was accused of "failure to follow a directive from your superiors; failure to zealously advocate on behalf of the United States; and engaging in conduct prejudicial to your client." Less than a week later, he was fired.

The day before Reuveni was fired, on April 10, the US Supreme Court found Abrego Garcia's deportation unlawful and ordered his return to the United States. After stonewalling for nearly two months, the government returned Abrego Garcia to the US on June 6 and immediately indicted and imprisoned him on bogus "human-smuggling" charges in Tennessee.

On June 22, Judge Barbara Holmes granted Abrego Garcia's request for pretrial release, citing a lack of evidence in the criminal case against him and concluding that he was not a flight risk. DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin claimed that Abrego Garcia "will never go free on American soil" and stated that he would be taken into ICE custody immediately if released from criminal detention.

On June 25, Judge Holmes is expected to formally set bail terms, at which point Abrego Garcia is likely to be taken into ICE custody.



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