

22-year-old Palestinian held in high-security ICE detention for nearly 2 years

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Taher Mohammed Taher Hasan, a 22-year-old Palestinian, has been held in a high-security ICE detention facility for 16 months, despite never being convicted of a crime.

Hasan first arrived in the US in September 2023 on a six-month visitor visa, intending to visit his cousin in Florida and return to Palestine before its expiry. However, after the launching of the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza in October of that year, as well as the increased violence across the West Bank and in his hometown of Nablus, Hasan grew increasingly fearful of returning home.

He made the decision to remain in the US, staying with friends in Texas, as any effort to return home would have posed life-threatening dangers. Hasan's visa expired in March 2024.

While working as a locksmith around Waco, Texas, he received a call to assist someone locked out of their car. The client was located within a local military base. Upon entering the base, Hasan's identification was checked, leading to his arrest and transfer to ICE custody.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immediately initiated proceedings to remove him from the US. However, 16 months later, Hasan remains confined in an ICE detention facility, without any clear explanation for why he has neither been deported nor released.

"I lost two years of my life, my best years of life, without doing anything, without being charged [with] anything," Hasan told the news organization Zeteo from the detention facility.

Hasan's concerns about returning home to Nablus were completely justified. Just days after the Israeli onslaught on Gaza in October 2023, five of his close friends were brutally killed. According to the report in Zeteo, in October 2024, the Israeli military reportedly destroyed his family's olive grove in Nablus, exploding grenades and obliterating trees that had been cultivated for generations.

The report also said the tragedy deepened in December 2024 when an Israeli soldier allegedly shot and killed one of his cousins and shot another, a 12-year-old girl, in the head while she was on her way to a medical appointment. During that same month, Israeli soldiers allegedly invaded Hasan's family's home, brutally beating his father and 17-year-old brother, and ransacking their house.

These acts of Zionist terrorism and violence against his

community and family support the legitimate fear that compelled Hasan to seek safety outside his homeland. To suggest he should have returned to such a violent environment is to ignore the fundamental right to safety and life.

The treatment of Taher Mohammed Taher Hasan extended beyond his initial arrest and into interrogation tactics while in the custody of the US government that recall the violation of fundamental rights carried out by the US government against so-called "enemy combatants" at CIA black sites around the world during the administration of George W. Bush.

According to a petition filed by his attorneys in federal court, shortly after his detention, Hasan was forcibly woken in the middle of the night, taken to an off-site location, and subjected to hours of questioning by officers who identified themselves as FBI agents.

These agents delved into intrusive and politically motivated questioning, asking about his family, his presence at the military base, whether he was part of a terrorist group, and if he was attempting anything illegal.

Most significant, Hasan's petition reveals that he was questioned about his political affiliations and pressured to become an informant, to "report to authorities about the activities of his friends and family in the West Bank." The agents allegedly demanded he name everyone in his immediate family, offering, "We can help you if you help us."

Hasan steadfastly refused, maintained his stance and insisted he had no information to share, reiterating that his presence at the base was solely for his locksmith job.

The petition further alleges that his refusal to become a stooge for the US government and its Israeli proxy was met with punishment, saying, "after Hasan was sent back to the detention center, he was transferred to the high-security part of the prison 'in retribution for his refusal to become an informant'." This punitive transfer reveals his captors' attempt to coerce and punish, turning a supposed immigration issue into political persecution.

Hasan's detention has included conditions that his legal team describes as akin to "Guantanamo creep into the domestic detention environment." Confined to a "high-security" section, he is forced to wear a "red shirt" identifying him among other high-security detainees, living in a cell infested with

“cockroaches and bugs on the floors, walls, and beds.” Twelve men share a single room with him, all reliant on one toilet and one shower.

Beyond the squalor, Hasan lives in constant fear. The facility typically houses individuals deemed a “risk or violence, assault, or other forms of abuse,” leading Hasan to worry constantly about being assaulted “by his cellmates, who grow angry at him when he prays.”

He has also endured racial and religious abuse from guards. During Ramadan, when he and other Muslim detainees complained about inadequate food for fasting, the warden allegedly responded with a chilling query: “Why don’t you convert to Christianity?” This blatant religious bigotry underscores the dehumanizing environment he is forced to endure.

Meanwhile, Hasan has struggled to receive basic medical attention. He uses outdated prescription lenses, hindering his vision and exacerbating his stress amidst safety concerns. He has also suffered from a persistent toothache, causing him significant pain. “The impact of these conditions on Mr. Hasan’s long-term mental well-being is exacerbated by the extraordinary hardship his family is enduring in Palestine,” his petition states.

Hasan has been trapped in a “detention limbo” because, during the initial removal process, he designated Palestine as his deportation destination and sought asylum, a protection status under the Convention Against Torture (CAT), and statutory withholding of removal.

These latter two statuses are crucial protection mechanisms, preventing deportation to places where an individual faces torture or a risk to his life. His appeals for these vital protections were denied.

In late September 2024, an immigration judge ordered Hasan’s removal to Palestine. However, ICE could not proceed with this order because he was protected by Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), a status designation implemented by former President Joe Biden in February 2024 to defer the removal of Palestinians from the US.

While DED, which expired on August 13, 2025, does not explicitly protect individuals from detention, immigration experts find Hasan’s confinement unusual given his non-removable status and lack of criminal conviction.

The US government’s own guidance mandates that DHS “must remove or release detained aliens within 90 days of a final order of removal,” unless their release poses “a special danger to the public.” Yet, Hasan’s lawyers emphatically state they have received no notification of any determination that he poses such a danger.

The absurdity of the situation was exposed in June 2025 when, despite his DED status, ICE transported Hasan and 25 other Palestinians, handcuffed and shackled, to an airport in Dallas. They were given no information about their destination, but Hasan’s petition describes them being brought near a plane

with its engines running, bearing the fuselage label “Oman.”

Hasan overheard one ICE official telling another Palestinian detainee they were being sent to Israel. Ultimately, only migrants of African and Latin American descent were boarded, and Hasan was later informed the departure was cancelled due to escalating tensions between Israel and Iran.

This highlights the chaotic and arbitrary nature of the detention regime and its willingness to attempt deportations to war zones or hostile territories. Hasan’s legal team has launched a vigorous campaign to win his freedom, filing a petition in federal court challenging his detention.

They are appealing for a range of measures, including his immediate removal from high-security detention, his ultimate release, a clear statement from the authorities regarding his intended deportation destination, and clarification on whether adequate efforts were made to send him to Palestine before attempting to send him elsewhere.

Central to their argument are grave due process concerns. His lawyers contend that his continued detention “no longer ‘bears a reasonable relation’ to any legitimate, nonpunitive government purpose.” They cite Supreme Court precedent affirming that immigration law “does not permit indefinite detention.” Yet, after 16 months, this is precisely what Hasan’s lawyers believe he is enduring.

Eric Lee, Hasan’s attorney, articulates the chilling implications:

There is definitely an element of indefinite detention. It just feels like they’re making this young Palestinian suffer more or less indefinitely based on a false hunch that in addition to being a visa overstayer, he poses some sort of security risk.

Speaking from the detention center, Taher Mohammed Taher Hasan expressed a “relief that he wasn’t facing the immediate danger from Israeli soldiers and settlers in Palestine.” He also expressed deep “sadness at not being able to be with and help his family, frustration in being unable to finish university and in being neither free nor deported home, and anger that he’s been detained for this long.”

Hasan also said, “Two years of my life for nothing.” He further emphasized the pain of absence during his family’s time of greatest need: “Those two years, that’s when my family needed me, and I was gone for two years, wrongfully [detained].”



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