US ICE agents seize British journalist and political commentator Sami Hamdi

Robert Stevens
28 October 2025

The Trump administration has detained and revoked the visa of prominent British journalist and political commentator Sami Hamdi, threatening him with deportation. Hamdi, a vocal critic of Israel's genocide in Gaza, was arrested on Sunday by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers at San Francisco International Airport.

London-based Hamdi is managing director of global risk and intelligence company International Interest, which "advises on political environments across the globe". He appears regularly as an expert Middle East analyst and commentator on British TV networks including the BBC, Sky News and Channel 4. Hamdi is a frequent guest on Al Jazeera English, a channel available in over 150 countries. As do millions internationally, Hamdi describes Israel's onslaught against the Palestinians as a genocide.

Sami's father, Mohamed Hechmi Hamdi, was also a journalist and a political activist. Under the threat of persecution, Mohamed Hamdi, an opponent of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's dictatorial regime in Tunisia, fled to London seeking refuge, via Algeria and Sudan. Sami Hamdi graduated from SOAS University in the UK capital.

Hamdi was detained as he began a speaking tour, having already made several appearances at events sponsored by the Council on American?Islamic Relations (CAIR), a Muslim civil rights and advocacy organisation. The day prior to his detention he spoke at the annual gala for the CAIR chapter in Sacramento. He was seized as he prepared to board a domestic flight to Florida where he was to address the gala for CAIR's chapter in Tampa the next day.

Hamdi was denounced as a terrorist by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DHS) spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin who posted on X, "Under President Trump, those who support terrorism and undermine American national security will not be allowed to work or visit this country". She added, "This individual's visa was revoked and he is in ICE custody pending removal."

Hamdi has previously made multiple entries into the United States, holding lawful immigration status through a valid visa. The BBC noted in its report on his arrest that "DHS, ICE, and the State Department did not answer the BBC's request for evidence of Hamdi's alleged support of terrorism."

Hamdi's legal team stated on Monday that Hamdi "is currently being detained at Golden State Annex in California. We know he is safe, and his legal team — made up of CAIR-CA, MLFA [Muslim Legal Fund of America], and attorney Hassan Ahmad — are determining next steps."

CNN reported that Hamdi's wife Soumaya told them "he has been held for more than 24 hours 'without recourse to legal representation or consular assistance.' Soumaya added, 'He is effectively being held incommunicado'".

In a statement issued Sunday CAIR explained that Hamdi was seized earlier that day "apparently in response to his vocal criticism of the Israeli apartheid government during his ongoing speaking tour… everyone should recognize that arresting a British citizen legally visiting the United States because he dared to criticize a foreign nation's genocide is our government's latest blatant affront to free speech."

On Tuesday CAIR-CA CEO Hussam Ayloush issued an update on Hamdi's case, stating, "CAIR-CA's legal team, which includes CAIR-SFBA Executive Director Zahra Billoo and CAIR-LA Immigrants' Rights Senior Managing Attorney Amina Fields, was finally able to meet with Sami and spend a few hours with him at the ICE Golden State Annex detention center in Central California."

CAIR noted that far-right Trump adviser Laura Loomer

© World Socialist Web Site

"has since taken public credit for Hamdi's detention, boasting that ICE acted on her demands after she smeared him with anti-Muslim conspiracy theories.

"Earlier this month, Loomer also allegedly influenced Secretary of State Marco Rubio to suspend all US visas for Palestinians from Gaza, after she posted videos attacking wounded children being flown to US hospitals for treatment and called their evacuation an 'Islamic invasion.' Loomer later thanked Rubio, claiming she had spoken with him personally to stop the flights."

Four days before his detention, Amy Mek, the founder of the Rise Align Ignite Reclaim (RAIR) Foundation, a right-wing, anti-Islamic organisation issued a fascistic rant on the X platform stating of Hamdi, "Remove him. Bar re-entry" as a "NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT."

Hamdi's arrest came in the week that the Trump administration escalated ICE raids, as the immediate response to 7 million people protesting nationwide in the "No Kings" protests against his attacks on democratic rights and the threat of dictatorship. The WSWS noted October 22 that in the days since the mass protests ICE gestapo squads using military-style force against immigrant communities, "launched new raids and major kidnapping operations in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, and in Wilder, Idaho".

As of this month well over 100,000 people (119,500) had been arrested and booked into detention centres by ICE since Trump's inauguration in January. On October 8, WIRED reported that "nearly 60,000 migrants were currently in detention".

Central to the ICE raids is a sweeping clampdown on all opposition to the foreign policy of US imperialism, including its backing for Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing of Gaza. In March, Columbia University graduate and pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil was arrested and remains under threat of deportation in his ongoing case. In September, a Louisiana immigration judge ordered that Khalil be deported to Syria or Algeria.

The same month, British-Gambian citizen Momodou Taal, a graduate student at Cornell University, was forced to leave the US to escape arrest and detention by ICE agents following his lawsuit—*Momodou Taal v. Donald Trump*—challenging the legality of Trump's decrees banning campus protests against the Gaza genocide.

Hamdi is the latest journalist to be snatched and threatened with deportation by ICE over their pro-Palestinian views.

During the first "No Kings" day of protest on June 14, Spanish-language independent journalist Mario Guevara was arrested in DeKalb County, Georgia, while live-streaming the peaceful demonstration to his audience. Guevara had lived in the US for over two decades and was in the process of obtaining a green card for permanent residency. On October 3, Guevara was deported to El Salvador.

Hamdi's seizure by ICE came just two days after the Wayne State University Law School in Detroit sponsored an October 24 meeting, on "Executive Orders and Constraints on Free Speech," which dealt with the legal and political issues arising from the Trump administration's persecution of Taal. As a result of his persecution Taal was not able to appear in person and joined the meeting remotely via video. Among those on the panel were Eric Lee, one of Taal's attorneys in his case. Lee explained that freedom of speech is guaranteed under the Bill of Rights not just to American citizens, but to everyone living in the United States. The word "citizen" does not appear in the text of the First Amendment, which refers to the rights of the people, he said.

Despite reportage of Hamdi's arrest by the BBC, *The Guardian*, Sky News and several major US media groups, including the *New York Times* and CNN, the British Labour government—which has defended Israel's genocide to the hilt—has made no statement in defence of its citizen, let alone demanded his release to continue his speaking tour. CNN reported, "When asked if Hamdi has had consular assistance or legal representation, a spokesperson for the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said it was 'in contact with the family of a British man detained in the USA' and 'in touch with the local authorities.'"

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site