

El Gamal family released from ICE detention

Our reporters
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A federal judge ordered the release of Hayam El Gamal and her five children Thursday, ending nearly 10 months of imprisonment at the Dilley family detention center in South Texas.

The family's attorney Christopher Godshall-Bennett announced the ruling on X within minutes of leaving the courtroom. "Just finished arguing the El Gamal family's habeas petition in San Antonio. The Court has ordered their IMMEDIATE RELEASE," Godshall-Bennett wrote. "I left the courtroom in tears, thrilled that this family can return to their home."

Co-counsel Eric Lee posted: "The El Gamals are finally, finally being released." Less than two hours later, Lee reported that ICE was stonewalling the court. "The court order has been published demanding ICE release the El Gamal family immediately and ICE has still not yet even agreed to speak to us," he wrote from Dilley. "We have been at Dilley for an hour." By Thursday evening Lee posted simply: "The El Gamal family is free."

A third attorney for the family, Niels Frenzen of the USC Gould School of Law Immigration Clinic, said in a statement: "A federal judge has ordered the Government to release a family who have been unlawfully targeted and punished because of the alleged actions of their husband and father. This release order is long overdue. But the Administration's efforts to deport the family continue, so their ordeal is not over yet."

US District Judge Fred Biery of the Western District of Texas issued the order Thursday morning after a hearing in San Antonio. Biery directed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to release "Petitioners Hayam El Gamal, Habiba Soliman, and the 4 minor children, E.S.; A.S.; H.S.; and O.S." immediately. The ruling adopted the recommendation of US Magistrate Judge Elizabeth Chestney, who had found Monday that the government failed to show the family posed any

danger or flight risk and warned of "significant risks that the Government will intervene to again target Petitioners' case."

The family—Hayam El Gamal, her 18-year-old daughter Habiba, a 16 year old, a nine year old and two five-year-old twins—had been held at the Dilley Family Residential Center since June 2025. ICE seized them two days after the June 1, 2025 Boulder, Colorado firebombing attack for which Hayam El Gamal's husband Mohamed Sabry Soliman was arrested.

The family had no advance knowledge of the attack. An FBI agent testified to this in court. El Gamal filed for divorce from Soliman after his arrest. None of this prevented the Department of Homeland Security from shipping the family from Colorado Springs to a detention camp nearly a thousand miles away. An immigration judge set a \$15,000 bond for the family on September 19, 2025. The Trump administration used legal maneuvers to block the release. They remained imprisoned for another seven months.

The Trump administration attacked the ruling within hours. Department of Homeland Security Acting Assistant Secretary Lauren Bis denounced Biery, who was appointed to the federal bench by former US President Bill Clinton, as an "activist judge." "Despite receiving full due process and a final order of removal, this activist judge appointed by Bill Clinton is releasing this terrorist's family onto American streets," Bis said. She added that the administration would "continue to fight for the removal of those who have no right to be in our country, especially national security threats."

The statement branded an 18-year-old student, a nine year old, a 16 year old and two five year olds as terrorists. None of them has been charged with any crime.

In the days after the Boulder attack the administration moved to strip the family of their legal status and deport them, citing nothing more than their relationship

to Soliman. The *World Socialist Web Site* warned in June 2025 that the imprisonment of family members for the alleged crimes of a relative is the practice of medieval justice systems and police states. The administration asserted that power and spent 10 months trying to exercise it.

During that time the family's eldest daughter, 18-year-old Habiba, told reporters she was "completely broken." A nine-year-old sibling wrote: "We have been here for nine months. I really miss playing with my toys and my watch. Please get us out of here." In February an 18-month-old girl at the same facility nearly died of multiple viral infections after being denied medical care.

Dilley, opened as a "temporary" detention center in 2014 under the Obama administration, has been expanded and refilled under the second Trump administration with families seized in the nationwide ICE raids that began in 2025.

Biery's ruling also halted the administration's removal proceedings against the family so the asylum case can proceed.

El Gamal and her five children were held for 10 months in a Texas detention camp on the orders of the administration. None of them has been charged with any crime. A federal court has now ruled the imprisonment violated the Constitution. The administration says it will continue to pursue their deportation.



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