

Trump begins deporting Venezuelans, Colombians, Cubans and other migrants to Liberia

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A US deportation flight carrying 20 people landed shortly before 1 p.m. local time Thursday at Roberts International Airport outside Monrovia, Liberia. The reported nationalities of those aboard included Venezuelans, Cubans and Colombians, according to Reuters.

Five men refused to leave the plane. The *New York Times* reported that American federal agents forced them off, and that all five were eventually returned to the aircraft. A video verified by the *Times* shows deportees sitting on the tarmac beside the plane, surrounded by roughly 20 agents. The Liberian government has not clarified their status.

This is the first flight under an agreement permitting Washington to transfer up to 1,200 people to Liberia over the next year. Liberia is the 26th country to receive them. Some 23,000 people have already been sent abroad under at least 35 bilateral arrangements, according to Third Country Deportation Watch.

The three nationalities named in Thursday's flight are not incidental. Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba today face three of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes in the Western Hemisphere that have been greatly worsened by the recolonization drive by US imperialism.

In Venezuela, the confirmed death toll from the June 24 earthquakes stands at 6,438, with 86,358 injured. The site Venezuelareporta.org counts 41,334 still missing. In Colombia, the August 10 earthquake has killed 319, with 4,611 injured and 290 missing. In both countries, thousands of buildings collapsed and thousands more were structurally compromised—revealing that entire cities were built to engineering codes wholly inadequate to meet the known seismic risk.

In Cuba, UN officials have described the effects of the US economic and fuel blockade as a “silent Gaza.” In 2025, registered deaths reached double the births, even as millions have migrated in recent years. Infant mortality rose 148 percent between 2018 and 2025, from 4.0 to 9.9 per thousand.

These are not separate disasters. Venezuela's economy was strangled by 15 years of US sanctions before Washington invaded outright on January 3, abducted the president and impounded its oil revenues. Colombia absorbed over \$10 billion in US military aid across a quarter century of Plan Colombia, financing an ongoing civil war before helping install the President Abelardo de la Espriella, a lawyer associated with fascist paramilitaries. Cuba

has been blockaded for six decades, and the Trump administration has cut off its oil supply and sanctioned investors across multiple sectors this year.

US imperialism manufactured the conditions that drove millions from these countries and caused the current devastation. It is now deporting those who escaped to US soil to one of the ten poorest countries in the world.

Liberia: the disposal ground

Liberia is not a random destination. It was founded in 1822 by freed American slaves and became a de facto US colony within decades—rich in minerals and heavily exploited by American capital after the Second World War and throughout the Cold War. When Cold War support ended, the country collapsed into civil war; the 1989–2003 conflicts alone killed some 300,000 people.

Its health system never recovered from the 2014–15 Ebola epidemic, and the US State Department currently maintains a Level 2 travel advisory for Liberia, citing crime, civil unrest and health infrastructure concerns.

The arrangement is completely venal. Following Liberia's October 2025 agreement to accept Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who continues to fight his deportation in the US, Washington extended Liberian business and tourism visas from 12 to 36 months and signed a \$124 million health sector memorandum. Reuters reports \$5 million allocated for Liberian “immigration management.”

The conditions awaiting deportees across Africa follow a consistent pattern of indefinite confinement. In Congo, deportees told the Associated Press they were held behind locked gates, forbidden to leave alone, and permitted outside roughly once a week under IOM escort. In Equatorial Guinea, the AP found deportees confined in a hotel owned by the family of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, barred from leaving, given uneven access to medical care, and subjected to repeated pressure to return to the countries they had fled—of at least 32 people held there, 25 had been sent home by May. An international coalition sued Ghana in June on behalf of 27 deportees, alleging that most were rapidly returned to their home countries in defiance of US

protection orders, some having been held under armed guard.

Thousands of miles from any court with jurisdiction over their captivity, this amounts to indefinite imprisonment without charge, trial, or sentence—cruel and unusual punishment by any honest definition, permitted only because US law pretends immigration detention is “civil” rather than punitive.

The apparatus of disappearances

Third-country deportation flights are the end point of a machinery being built across the United States. *Politico* reports that in the past year, judges have ruled against ICE’s detention tactics more than 16,000 times, roughly two-thirds of those cases stemming from a single two-page memo reinterpreting a 1996 statute to permit the detention of people who had lived in the country for years.

Third-country deportation exists precisely to circumvent the courts. When a judge rules a person cannot be returned home because they face persecution or torture, they are stationed 7,000 kilometers away instead, where no US court has jurisdiction and no one is watching.

The precedent was set much earlier. Beginning February 4, 2025, the administration flew Venezuelan detainees to Guantánamo Bay—the site built expressly to hold prisoners where US constitutional protections were said not to apply. In March 2025, 238 Venezuelans were flown to El Salvador’s CECOT prison, 137 of them under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, in open defiance of a federal court order to turn the planes around. They were imprisoned without charge, trial or sentence on allegations of Tren de Aragua membership that rested in many cases on nothing more than tattoos. Held incommunicado for four months, they were released only in a July 2025 prisoner exchange.

Asked in April 2025 about sending US citizens to the same prison, Trump told El Salvador’s Bukele that “homegrown are next,” adding that he would need “five more places.” In other words, what is being tested on migrants—detention without charges, imprisonment abroad, defiance of the courts—is being prepared for citizens and political opponents.

These agreements are being challenged in *U.T. v. Bondi*, which contests whether the contracted third countries provide the “full and fair” asylum procedures US law requires.

Deportation flights continue to Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba

While Washington opens new routes to third countries, the flights going directly to Venezuela, Cuba and Colombia carry their own lethal consequences. On June 24, a flight carrying 146 Venezuelans deported from the United States landed hours before the earthquakes. Venezuelan authorities locked them inside the Hotel Sanitario Negra Hipólita in La Llanada—as they had

thousands of others arriving on more than 160 flights coordinated between Washington and Caracas since 2025. When the building collapsed that evening, 134 of them died.

Oswadeliz Núñez, whose son Daniel died there, told *El País*: “They were locked in those rooms, under key. The night of the earthquake I wrote to the numbers on the Vuelta a la Patria page and nobody answered me.” Daniel had been stopped while driving in Jacksonville. “I fixed up his room as nicely as I could, but he never arrived. I received the little box with his ashes.”

The deportation flights have since resumed through an airport in eastern Venezuela while Maiquetía remains disabled, with two landing in August.

Colombia’s experience follows the same pattern. The country accepted 475 deportation flights from the United States between 2020 and 2024. When former President Gustavo Petro briefly suspended them last year after migrants arrived in chains, the pause lasted only days before Washington forced their resumption—and there has been no announcement suggesting they will be discontinued after the earthquake.

Whether a deportee is flown to Caracas, Bogotá, Havana or Monrovia, the underlying principle is the same and it is indefensible: workers are being forcibly removed from places where they had built lives and sent to places where their safety cannot be guaranteed. This reality is summed up by the 20 agents surrounding five men who refused to get off the plane, on a tarmac in a country none of them had chosen or to which they had the slightest connection.

The right of workers to live and work where they choose, without fear of persecution or deportation, is not a concession to be granted by any government. It requires the independent political mobilization of the international working class on a socialist program that abolishes the outmoded capitalist nation-state system.



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