

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20528

Mr. Todd Lyons
Acting Director
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20536

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Noem, Secretary Rubio, and Acting Director Lyons:

We write about the disturbing arrest and detention of Rumeysa Ozturk by agents from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) this week. The rationale for this arrest appears to be this student's expression of her political views. We are calling for full due process in this case and are seeking answers about this case and about ICE's policy that has led to the identification and arrest of university students with valid legal status.

On March 25, 2025, a Fulbright scholar with a valid F-1 student visa was arrested in Somerville, Massachusetts, by six agents, either from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). The student, 30-year-old Rumeysa Ozturk, is a PhD student at Tufts University. Ozturk was arrested around 5:30pm near her home while on the way to a Ramadan dinner event.¹ Surveillance footage of the arrest shows officers approach her in plain black clothing, with no visible badges.² She screams as an officer grabs her hands. During the arrest, one officer pulls out his badge as other officers appear and cover their faces with

¹ Associated Press, "Turkish student at Tufts University detained, video shows masked people handcuffing her," Jake Offenhartz, Kathy McCormack and Michael Casey, March 26, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/tufts-student-detained-massachusetts-immigration-6c3978da98a8d0f39ab311e092ffd892>; Mass Live, "Video shows Tufts student arrested by federal agents in masks and plainclothes," Charlie McKenna, March 26, 2025, <https://www.masslive.com/news/2025/03/video-shows-tufts-student-arrested-by-federal-agents-in-masks-and-plainclothes.html>.

² Boston 25 News, "Mass. judge demands answers after Tufts students detained by federal agents is rushed to Louisiana," Ryan Breslin, March 27, 2025, <https://www.boston25news.com/news/local/ice-reveals-where-detained-tufts-phd-student-is-being-held-judge-demands-answers/XYXKCUCOHNA2REXMS5V54JQN5I/>; CBS Boston, "Video shows ICE officials' arrest Tufts University student," March 26, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMGkGCsgkUs>.

masks.³ The surveillance video shows officers loading Ozturk into an SUV and departing in three unmarked vehicles. Bystanders observed that the incident “looked like a kidnapping.”⁴

For almost 24 hours, Ozturk’s location was unknown. Her lawyer could not locate her, and ICE’s Online Detainee Locator System showed that Ozturk was in ICE custody, but the “Current Detention Facility” field was blank. During the afternoon of March 26, the locator system was updated to show that Ozturk was being held at the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center.⁵ ICE posted her location in Louisiana more than twelve hours after U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani ordered that the government not remove Ozturk from Massachusetts for at least 48 hours after first providing the court with notice of its intent to relocate her.⁶ It is unclear exactly when Ozturk was removed from Massachusetts and whether the removal violated the court order.⁷

While the Department of Homeland Security has not publicly specified the alleged activities that led to Ozturk’s arrest, this arrest appears to be one of the latest examples in a string of ICE arrests of university students with valid green cards and visas because of their political views.⁸ Secretary of State Marco Rubio has stated the Administration will deny visas to those who “lie to us” and “participate in that sort of activity,” referring to protest movements on campuses.⁹ Ozturk was one of four authors of an op-ed in the Tufts student paper, endorsed by 32 other Tufts graduate students, which called for “the Tufts administration to meaningfully engage with and actualize” Israel- and Palestine-related resolutions passed by the university’s Student Senate

³ WCVB Channel 5 Boston, “Surveillance shows Tufts graduate student detained,” :10-:20, March 26, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PuFIs7OkzYY>.

⁴ Associated Press, “Turkish student at Tufts University detained, video shows masked people handcuffing her,” Jake Offenhartz, Kathy McCormack and Michael Casey, March 26, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/tufts-student-detained-massachusetts-immigration-6c3978da98a8d0f39ab311e092ffd892>.

⁵ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Online Detainee Locator System, <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/results>.

⁶ Court Listener, Ozturk v. Hyde, March 25, 2025, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69790775/3/ozturk-v-hyde/>.

⁷ Associated Press, “Turkish student at Tufts University detained, video shows masked people handcuffing her,” Jake Offenhartz, Kathy McCormack and Michael Casey, March 26, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/tufts-student-detained-massachusetts-immigration-6c3978da98a8d0f39ab311e092ffd892>.

⁸ New York Times, “Columbia Student Hunted by ICE Sues to Prevent Deportation,” Jonah E. Bromwich and Hamed Aleaziz, March 24, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/24/nyregion/columbia-student-ice-suit-yunseo-chung.html>; NBC News “ICE detains University of Alabama doctoral student as government's college crackdown continues,” Patrick Smith, March 27, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/university-alabama-doctoral-student-detained-ice-governments-college-crackdown-rcna198320>; BBC News, “The Indian scholar arrested in US over father-in-law’s Hamas link,” Neyaz Farooquee, March 24, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8rk62znm3yo>.

⁹ C-SPAN, “Secretary Rubio Defends Revoking Turkish Student's Visa,” March 27, 2025, <https://www.c-span.org/clip/news-conference/secretary-rubio-defends-revoking-turkish-students-visa/5158479>.

in 2024.¹⁰ Tufts University was informed that Ozturk’s “visa has been terminated”¹¹ — similar to other recent cases in which ICE agents have declared, without any judicial or administrative hearing, that they were “terminating” or “revoking” students’ green cards and visas.¹²

These are deeply troubling incidents. The Administration should not summarily detain and deport legal residents of this country merely for expressing their political views. Absent compelling evidence justifying her detention and the revocation of her status, we call for Ozturk’s release and the restoration of her visa. To address our concerns about this matter and to provide clarity on ICE policy regarding what appears to be a series of similar incidents, we ask that ICE answer the following questions by April 4, 2025:

1. Why did DHS officials arrest Ozturk?
 - a. What agency conducted the arrest?
 - b. Which DHS officials approved this arrest?
 - c. Under what specific legal authority was the arrest authorized?
 - d. How many students has DHS arrested pursuant to this authority?
2. Secretary Rubio indicated that Ozturk’s student visa was revoked.¹³ What was the legal authority under which her visa was terminated?
 - a. How many students’ visas has the State Department terminated under this authority?
 - b. What notice did Ozturk receive of the visa termination prior to her arrest?
 - c. Which agency provided her with notice?
3. Has the State Department updated its policy governing visa revocations? Please provide a copy of any relevant policy documents.

¹⁰ Tufts Daily, “Op-ed: Try again, President Kumar: Renewing calls for Tufts to adopt March 4 TCU Senate resolutions,” Rumeysa Ozturk, Fatima Rahman, Genesis Perez and Nicholas Ambeliotis, March 26, 2024, <https://www.tuftsdaily.com/article/2024/03/4ftk27sm6jkj>; Tufts Daily, “TCU Senate passes 3 of 4 resolutions seeking university accountability for ties to Israel,” Matthew Sage, Julieta Grané, and Rachel Liu, March 4, 2024, <https://www.tuftsdaily.com/article/2024/03/tcu-senate-passes-3-of-4-resolutions-seeking-university-accountability-for-ties-to-israel>.

¹¹ Tufts University Office of the President, “Message about a Tufts student taken into custody,” Sunil Kumar, March 25, 2025, <https://www.tufts.edu/president/speeches-and-messages/03252025-Message-about-a-Tufts-student-taken-into-custody>.

¹² New York Times, “Columbia Student Hunted by ICE Sues to Prevent Deportation,” Jonah E. Bromwich and Hamed Aleaziz, March 24, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/24/nyregion/columbia-student-ice-suit-yunseo-chung.html>; CNN, “Visa of Cornell University student fighting deportation is revoked by the State Department,” Gloria Pazmino, March 26, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/25/us/cornell-university-student-visa-revoked/index.html>; NBC News, “ICE detains University of Alabama doctoral student as government’s college crackdown continues,” Patrick Smith, March 27, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/university-alabama-doctoral-student-detained-ice-governments-college-crackdown-rcna198320>.

¹³ Politico, “Rubio says State Department has revoked more than 300 student visas,” Ali Bianco, March 27, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/27/marco-rubio-student-visas-palestine-00005141>.

4. When Administration officials indicated that Ozturk “engaged in activities in support of Hamas,”¹⁴ which specific activities were they referring to?
5. Why did DHS transport Ozturk to Louisiana?
 - a. Please provide the date and time when Ozturk was removed from Massachusetts.
 - b. Please describe when Ozturk arrived in Louisiana, the method of transportation used, and any stops made between Massachusetts and Louisiana.
6. What is DHS/ICE’s policy regarding the use of unmarked vehicles, face coverings, plain clothing, and the display of badges by DHS agents during arrests?
 - a. In Ozturk’s case, why did DHS agents:
 - i. Cover their faces?
 - ii. Not display badges when initially approaching her?
 - iii. Use unmarked vehicles?
 - b. Under such circumstances, how can individuals distinguish legitimate DHS officers from potential impersonators?
7. Please provide the date and time when Ozturk was first permitted to contact an attorney, family member, or other outside contact.
 - a. If she was not immediately provided access to an attorney, please explain why.
8. The South Louisiana ICE Processing Center has been the subject of health-related complaints, including for denying food that appropriately accommodates detainees’ religious views, serving undrinkable water, and not complying with protocols on the spread of infectious diseases.¹⁵ Given that Ozturk is currently fasting for Ramadan and has asthma, how are her health needs being met while she remains in detention, and is Ozturk being offered a prayer room and being offered Halal food?
9. Is DHS or any other agency compiling a dossier of university students involved in Palestine-related protests?
 - a. If so, who at DHS is responsible for overseeing this process, and what are the criteria used to determine whether a student should be added to this list?
 - b. How, if at all, is artificial intelligence being used in this selection process? How, if at all, was artificial intelligence used in Ozturk’s case?
10. What are the ICE Student Exchange and Visitor Program policies for terminating a student without a request by a university?

¹⁴ CNN, “What we know about the Tufts University PhD student detained by federal agents,” Gloria Pazmino, March 27, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/27/us/rumeyza-ozturk-detained-what-we-know/index.html>.

¹⁵ Yale Law School, “Students Document Reports of Abuse at Immigration Detention Center,” January 17, 2025, <https://law.yale.edu/yls-today/news/students-document-reports-abuse-immigration-detention-center>; Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, Department of Homeland Security, “OIDO Inspection of South Louisiana ICE Processing Center,” August 2, 2024, pp. 25-26, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-08/24_0802_oido_final-inspection-report-south-louisiana-ice-processing-center-508.pdf.

- a. What is the policy on notifying educational institutions of such terminations?
- b. Why was Tufts University not notified of Ms. Ozturk's termination by SEVP?

11. Please provide a copy of all notices to appear in immigration court in Ozturk's case.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this critical matter.

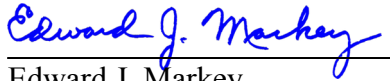
Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



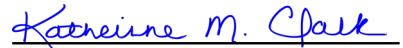
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress



Tina Smith
United States Senator



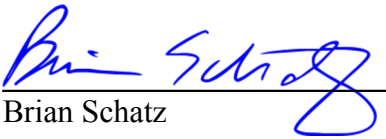
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
United States Senator



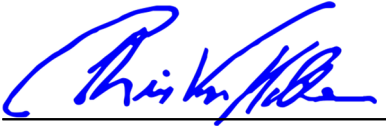
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



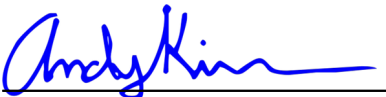
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator




Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



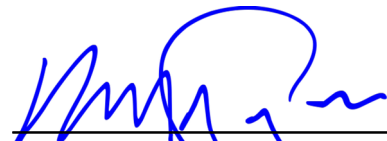
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



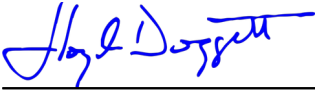
LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



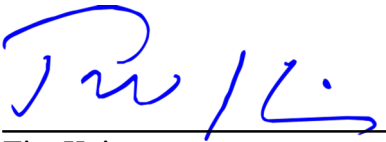
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



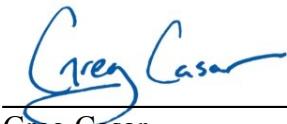
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



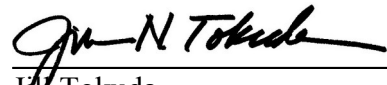
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress