

U.S. judge arrested as immigration crackdown escalates



Milwaukee, April 26 (RHC)-- U.S. federal agents have arrested a Wisconsin judge on charges of obstructing immigration agents, escalating tensions between President Donald Trump's administration and the judiciary.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Director Kash Patel said on Friday that the judge was arrested for allegedly helping an undocumented migrant evade federal agents.

In a criminal complaint, the U.S. Department of Justice alleged that Hannah Dugan, a Milwaukee County circuit judge, refused to turn over the man after immigration agents showed up to arrest him in her court on April 18th, and that she tried to help him evade arrest by allowing him to exit through a jury door.

"Thankfully our agents chased down the perp [undocumented migrant] on foot and he's been in custody since, but the Judge's obstruction created increased danger to the public," Patel said.

The Justice Department has said that Judge Dugan became "visibly angry" when immigration officials arrived to arrest Flores-Ruiz in her court, and called the effort "absurd."

Dugan appeared briefly at a federal court in Milwaukee to face charges of obstructing a proceeding and concealing an individual to prevent arrest, records show. She was released and is scheduled to enter a plea on May 15th. A crowd formed outside the court, chanting "Free the judge now."

Dugan left the court through a side door following the hearing and was driven away in a black SUV, without comment.

Immigration and legal rights advocates have said that subjecting civic spaces, such as courts, to immigration enforcement operations could increase hesitation among people without legal status to take part in activities such as testifying in court about crimes.

"No one is above the law," Attorney General Pam Bondi wrote on social media.

The Trump administration has been locked in an escalating confrontation with federal judges, as several have issued rulings that limit its aggressive use of presidential power in immigration and other matters. State courts have played a less significant role in that dispute.

After making his announcement on social media, Patel deleted the post, which he had made before the case against Dugan was unsealed in federal court. He later wrote another social media post on the case.

"Director Patel's statement shows that Trump's FBI is more concerned about weaponising federal law enforcement, punishing people without due process, and intimidating anyone who opposes those policies, than they are with seeking justice," Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley said in a statement.

Trump launched a sweeping immigration crackdown after taking office in January, and the Justice Department has directed federal prosecutors to pursue criminal cases against local officials who interfere with the effort.

Such resistance was widespread during Trump's first 2017-2021 term in office.

Leon Fresco, an immigration lawyer, told Al Jazeera that arresting a judge in these circumstances was "very rare." "This is only the second time this has happened," he said.

"It is now going to be a matter of conflict of laws. Does the state judge have a point that ICE was thwarting the ability of the state judge to have criminal court hearings? Or does ICE have a point that the state judge was thwarting ICE's ability to engage in immigration enforcement?" he said.

[SOURCE: teleSUR]



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