

Deported Salvadorean man Kilmar Abrego Garcia returned to U.S. to face trumped up charges



The U.S. deported 29-year-old Kilmar Abrego Garcia to El Salvador on March 15, defying a court order [Murray Osorio PLLC via AP Photo]

After his mistaken deportation to El Salvador, Abrego Garcia faces U.S. charges of supposedly

transporting undocumented migrants.

Washington, June 7 (RHC)-- A man the Donald Trump administration mistakenly deported to El Salvador has been brought back to the United States, where authorities say he will face criminal charges.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia, 29, a Salvadoran immigrant who had lived nearly half his life in Maryland before he was deported in March, faces charges of transporting undocumented migrants inside the US, according to recently unsealed court records.

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said on Friday that Abrego Garcia was returned to the US to “face justice.” The indictment against him was filed on May 21, more than two months after he was deported in spite of a court order barring his removal.

The charges stem from a 2022 traffic stop by the Tennessee Highway Patrol, which suspected Abrego Garcia of human trafficking but ultimately issued only a warning for an expired driver’s license, according to a Department of Homeland Security report.

Bondi, speaking at a news conference, said a grand jury had “found that over the past nine years, Abrego Garcia has played a significant role in an alien smuggling ring.” She said Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele agreed to return Abrego Garcia to the U.S. after American officials presented his government with an arrest warrant.

Abrego Garcia had been sent to El Salvador as part of a Trump scheme to move undocumented migrants it accuses of being gang members, to prison in the Central American country without due process.

Bukele said in a social media post that his government works with the Trump administration and “of course” would not refuse a request to return “a gang member” to the United States.

Al Jazeera’s Rosiland Jordan, reporting from Washington, DC, said Abrego Garcia could face up to 10 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine if convicted.

But “that does not deal with the ongoing matter of whether or not he should be deported,” she added. “That’s a separate legal matter.”

Abrego Garcia will have the chance to enter a plea in court and contest the charges at trial. If he is convicted, he would be deported to El Salvador after serving his sentence, Bondi said.

In a statement, Abrego Garcia’s lawyer, Andrew Rossman, said it would now be up to the U.S. judicial system to ensure he received due process. “Today’s action proves what we’ve known all along – that the administration had the ability to bring him back and just refused to do so,” said Rossman, a partner at law firm Quinn Emanuel.

Abrego Garcia’s deportation defied an immigration judge’s 2019 order granting him protection from being sent back to El Salvador, where it found he was likely to be persecuted by gangs if returned, court records show.

Trump critics pointed to the erroneous deportation as an example of the excesses of the Republican president’s aggressive approach to stepping up deportations.

Officials countered by alleging that Abrego Garcia was a member of the MS-13 gang. His lawyers have denied that he was a gang member and said he had not been convicted of any crime.

Abrego Garcia’s case has become a flash point for escalating tensions between the executive branch and the judiciary, which has ruled against a number of Trump’s policies.

The U.S. Supreme Court ordered the Trump administration to facilitate Abrego Garcia's return, with liberal Justice Sonia Sotomayor saying the government had cited no basis for what she called his "warrantless arrest."

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis also opened a probe into what, if anything, the Trump administration did to secure his return, after his lawyers accused officials of stonewalling their requests for information.

[SOURCE: AL JAZEERA and NEWS AGENCIES]

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