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CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

May 3, 2021

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave NW
Washington, DC 20016

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

On behalf of the City of Sacramento, we are writing to express our grave concern over the continued detention of Omar Ameen, an Iraqi refugee and Sacramento resident who was wrongly scapegoated by the Trump administration in an attempt to destroy the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program.

On April 21, 2021, when he ordered Mr. Ameen released from the Sacramento County Jail, Federal District Court Judge Edmund F. Brennan eliminated any pretense that his prosecution was based on anything but the Trump Administration's campaign to vilify Muslim refugees and reverse Obama-era refugee policy.

Now that he has been exonerated, we implore you to release Mr. Ameen from federal detention, return him to our Sacramento community, and undo the harm caused by the Trump Administration.

Background

Omar Ameen is an Iraqi refugee who was resettled to the United States in 2014, a process that required him to pass extensive security screenings conducted by or using databases from, the CIA, FBI, National Security Agency, National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Defense, USCIS' Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate, and Interpol.

After over three years living peaceably in the United States, Mr. Ameen was arrested from his home in our Sacramento community in the early hours of August 15, 2018. He was taken into federal custody and told he faced extradition to Iraq after being accused of killing a police officer as part of an ISIS hit squad. If extradited to Iraq, Mr. Ameen faced a likely death penalty. As he has irrefutably shown, Mr. Ameen was not in Iraq at the time of his alleged crime; he had been living in Turkey since 2012 where he had claimed asylum from Iraq.

As extensively documented by [The New Yorker](#), since 2018 Mr. Ameen has been the victim of a grave politicization of the U.S. judicial system by the previous Administration. There is formidable evidence that the Trump Administration encouraged the Iraqi government to seek Mr. Ameen's extradition despite overwhelming evidence that Ameen had no ties to the crime and despite knowledge that extradition to Iraq would mean near-certain death for Ameen.

Mr. Ameen's arrest was instrumental to the Trump administration's destruction of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program. A month after Mr. Ameen's arrest, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [cited](#) his case as the "security imperative" justifying the reduction of the resettlement quota to a historic low for fiscal year 2019.

Moreover, the accusations themselves were riddled with internal contradictions, suggestions of bias, and irregularities consistent with fraud. Despite ever-increasing evidence that their lacked any foundation, the U.S. Government under the Trump Administration continued to press forward with both its prosecution of Mr. Ameen and the associated dismantlement of U.S. refugee resettlement.

More egregiously, the DOJ under Trump apparently knowingly [failed](#) to disclose a letter from the Turkish government to Mr. Ameen's defense lawyers that affirmed the Turkish government could provide Ameen's phone records in Turkey. Judge Brennan called these phone records "the most critical" piece of evidence for his decision. The DOJ sat on this letter for eight months before the defense team received the letter from a State Department official.

On April 21, 2021, Judge Brennan [issued](#) a resounding rejection of the charges against Omar Ameen. Judge Brennan denied the extradition request and found the defense had "obliterated probable cause." Of the prosecution's allegations, he said: "this series of events is simply not plausible." Judge Brennan further stated that the sole "eye-witness" had "articulated allegations against Ameen that are absurd on their face."

That day marked an incredible victory for Mr. Ameen, and it should have been a time full of reunion and celebration for him and his family. Instead, his nightmare continues: Rather than being released, Mr. Ameen was transferred into ICE custody on an immigration hold linked to the extradition request and put into deportation proceedings.

The Trump Administration's acts made a mockery of the rule of law and the American judicial system. These acts directly undermined our country's Refugee Resettlement Program, which has provided safety to 3 million individuals while safeguarding U.S. national security.

Moving Forward

We urge the immediate release of Mr. Ameen and an end to his deportation proceedings. Not only is there no basis for his continued detention or deportation, the false accusations against Mr. Ameen would place him in danger of wrongful execution were he returned to Iraq.

Mr. Ameen is a longtime resident of Sacramento, and has strong family ties here. As his community, we support him to the fullest extent and want him to come home to Sacramento.

Sincerely,

Darrell Steinberg, Mayor

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City of Sacramento

Sean Loloee, Councilmember
City of Sacramento

Eric Guerra, Councilmember
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