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Denaturalization Know Your Rights (KYR) Resource: Understanding Revocation of Citizenship

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By Amber Qureshi

On his first day in office, Trump issued an [Executive Order](#) that requires “adequate resources” to be allocated towards denaturalization, a process by which the government can take away someone’s U.S. citizenship obtained through naturalization. This resource builds on Muslims for Just Futures’ [Guidance for Frontline Responders and Policy Advocates | Decoding Trump’s Authoritarian Orders: Implications for BAMEMSA and Immigrant Communities](#), in which we provided a broad analysis of the many aspects of Trump’s initial Executive Orders that expand the immigration enforcement and counterterrorism apparatus. As part of our series of analysis of these harmful Executive Orders, this resource focuses specifically on what our communities need to know about denaturalization and offers critical KYR information for community preparedness.

As under the first Trump administration, we anticipate that individuals from Muslim-majority countries and Black, Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (BAMEMSA) communities will be particularly impacted by this renewed push for denaturalization of U.S. citizens. The administration may also utilize denaturalization as a tool to target political dissidents, [like the U.S. government has done in the past](#).

Under the first Trump administration, although there was an increase in denaturalization cases, the total number of people who were affected by denaturalization remained small. This was partly because of the time and resources it takes for the government to pursue a denaturalization case. However, given that the Trump administration has again signaled its priority to ramp up denaturalization efforts, it is important for our community to understand the process and for our movements to be aware of possible attacks against our leaders.

Understanding Denaturalization

→ Who Does It Apply To?

Denaturalization does not apply to people who obtained citizenship by birth – but instead, only naturalized U.S. citizens can be subjected to denaturalization.¹ A naturalized citizen can be denaturalized through civil or criminal proceedings. Most often, the government will claim that the person committed fraud during the naturalization process and therefore, their citizenship must be taken away.

¹ Denaturalization is different from a process called expatriation, through which U.S. citizens – by birth or naturalization – can voluntarily relinquish their citizenship.

→ How has the government pursued denaturalization in recent years?

In recent years, the government has primarily pursued *civil* denaturalization where:

- The citizen was not eligible for naturalization in the first place (**Illegal Procurement**).
 - For example, this may apply if the person did not satisfy the criteria for naturalization at the time they naturalized.
- In order to obtain citizenship, the citizen knowingly and willfully misrepresented something that might have impacted the final decision on their application for naturalization (**Concealment of Material Fact or Willful Misrepresentation**).

For example, this may apply if a person purposefully misrepresented or omitted their prior immigration or criminal history on their naturalization application to obtain citizenship.

Other grounds for civil denaturalization have not been used as much in recent history. Those include:

- The citizen became naturalized because of their service in the U.S. armed forces during wartime and they were discharged for other than honorable reasons before serving an aggregate of five years.
- The citizen refuses to testify as a witness in front of a congressional committee on their “subversive activities” within ten years after naturalizing and is convicted of contempt as a result.

→ What are grounds for criminal denaturalization?

For a person to be convicted of *criminal* denaturalization, the government must prove beyond a doubt that the person knowingly and contrary to law procured or attempted to procure the naturalization of any person. If the government is relying on a misrepresentation during the naturalization process, they must show that the misrepresentation was material – i.e. it had the tendency to influence the decision on naturalization.



Trump Administration's Denaturalization Priorities (6/11/25 Update)

→ Who will the Trump Administration target with denaturalization?

On June 11, 2025, the Assistant Attorney General of the United States issued a memo titled "Civil Division Enforcement Priorities," which lists five priorities of the Department of Justice's Civil Division. The Civil Division represents the United States, its agencies, and federal officials in a broad range of litigation. The memo states that the Department of Justice "shall prioritize and maximally pursue denaturalization proceedings in all cases permitted by law and supported by the evidence." It also establishes these broad categories as priorities for denaturalization cases:

1. People "who pose a **potential danger to national security**, including those with a nexus to terrorism, espionage, or the unlawful export from the United States of sensitive goods, technology, or information raising national security concerns;"
2. People "who engaged in **torture, war crimes**, or other **human rights violations**;"
3. People "who further or furthered the unlawful enterprise of **criminal gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and drug cartels**;"
4. People "who committed **felonies** that were not disclosed during the naturalization process;"
5. People "who committed **human trafficking, sex offenses, or violent crimes**;"
6. People "who engaged in various forms of **financial fraud against the United States** (including Paycheck Protection Program ("PPP") loan fraud and Medicaid/Medicare fraud);"
7. People "who engaged in **fraud against private individuals, funds, or corporations**;"
8. People "who acquired naturalization through **government corruption, fraud, or material misrepresentations**, not otherwise addressed by another priority category;"
9. "Cases referred by a United States Attorney's Office or in connection with **pending criminal charges**, if those charges do not fit within one of the other priorities;" and
10. "**Any other cases** referred to the Civil Division that the Division determines to be sufficiently important to pursue."

Although the memo explains that these are not the only categories of denaturalization cases that the Department of Justice will pursue, this still provides a roadmap for which cases the government considers important to prioritize.

The chart below summarizes the primary differences between the different grounds for denaturalization we have seen the government use in recent years



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	Illegal Procurement	Concealment of Material Fact or Willful Misrepresentation	Procurement of Naturalization Contrary to Law
Case Type	Civil	Civil	Criminal
Statute	8 U.S.C. § 1451(a)	8 U.S.C. § 1451(a)	18 U.S.C. § 1425(a)
Standard	U.S. citizen was not eligible for naturalization	U.S. citizen knowingly and willfully made a material misrepresentation during the naturalization process	U.S. citizen knowingly and contrary to law procured or attempted to procure naturalization
Statute of Limitations	None ²	None ³	10 years (18 U.S.C. § 3291)
Burden of proof	Clear, unequivocal, and convincing evidence	Clear, unequivocal, and convincing evidence	Beyond a reasonable doubt
Right to an attorney	No, but can hire an attorney	No, but can hire an attorney	Yes
Right to a jury trial	No	No	Yes
Result if denaturalized	Goes back to status person had before naturalization	Goes back to status person had before naturalization	Automatic revocation of naturalization + criminal sentence of up to 25 years
Impact on Derivatives⁴	None	Derivatives will lose their citizenship	Derivatives may lose their citizenship

Recent Cases

- **Baljinder Singh** was denaturalized in 2018 under the first Trump administration. In 1991, a man whose name a translator recorded as “Davinder Singh” sought asylum in California. He was released on bond and went to New Jersey. When he did not attend his next immigration court hearing, the court issued a deportation order against him. Many people are issued deportation orders for failing to appear because they did not receive proper notice of their hearing date or received incomplete or confusing information from the government. The next month, Baljinder Singh filed an asylum application under his correct name. He later married a U.S. citizen and became a U.S. citizen in 2006. Years later, the government matched the two sets of fingerprints and sought Singh’s denaturalization for fraudulently obtaining his citizenship. In January 2018, the government officially revoked his citizenship.

² Although there is no explicit statute of limitations under the civil denaturalization laws, there may be legal arguments available for application of the general statute of limitations for civil penalties.

³ See note 2.

⁴ This refers to spouses and children who become U.S. citizens through the naturalization of their parent or spouse whose citizenship has been revoked.



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- **Abdulrahman Farhane** was unjustly targeted through a sting operation following 9/11 when the government was rounding up Muslims and falsely accusing them of terrorism. He was charged with conspiracy to provide material support for terrorism and making false statements to law enforcement officers in connection with a terrorism investigation. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to launder money and lying to federal agents in 2006 and served 11 years in prison. Shortly after his release, the U.S. government began civil denaturalization proceedings against him. Even though Farhane was not arrested, charged, or convicted of any crimes before he naturalized, the government alleged that Farhane knowingly committed crimes before he was naturalized and lied about them during his naturalization process.

What Are Ways to Be Prepared

People applying for naturalization

The government most often pursues denaturalization under the false pretenses of “combatting fraud.” However, the questions that immigration agencies ask applicants are extremely broad and can even set people up for targeting later. For example, the naturalization application (N-400) asks:

- Have you **EVER** committed, agreed to commit, asked someone else to commit, helped commit, or tried to commit a crime or offense for which you were NOT arrested?
- Have you **EVER** helped anyone to enter, or try to enter, the United States illegally?
- Have you **EVER** made any misrepresentation to obtain any public benefit in the United States?
- Have you **EVER** been placed in removal, rescission, or deportation proceedings?
- Have you **EVER** been a member of, involved in, or in any way associated with, or have you **EVER** provided money, a thing of value, services or labor, or any other assistance or support to a group that:
 - Used a weapon or explosive with intent to harm another person or cause damage to property?
 - Engaged (participated) in kidnapping, assassination, or hijacking or sabotage of an airplane, ship, vehicle, or other mode of transportation?
 - Threatened, attempted (tried), conspired (planned with others), prepared, planned, advocated for, or incited (encouraged) others to commit any of the acts listed [above]?
- Have you **EVER** advocated (supported and promoted) any of the following, or been a member of, involved in, or in any way associated with any group **anywhere in the world** that advocated any of the following:
 - Opposition to all organized government;
 - World communism;
 - The establishment in the United States of a totalitarian dictatorship;
 - The overthrow by force or violence or other unconstitutional means of the Government of the United States or all forms of law;
 - The unlawful assaulting or killing of any officer or officers of the Government of the United States or of any other organized government because of their official character;
 - The unlawful damage, injury, or destruction of property; or
 - Sabotage?



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Note: We have not seen a recent denaturalization case brought under the theory that a person lied about their response to the last question above. Be aware, however, that the current civil denaturalization law allows the government to use a person's membership in any such organizations within *five years after naturalizing* as evidence that they were not "well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States at the time of naturalization." This means that, in the absence of countervailing evidence, the evidence of a person's membership in such an organization could alone be sufficient for their denaturalization.

Before you apply for naturalization, here are some things to consider:

- Make sure all of the information in your naturalization application is accurate.
- You can [request a copy of your immigration file from the government](#) to make sure that your responses during the naturalization process are not inconsistent with any other immigration benefit applications you may have submitted.
- Seek proper legal advice and assistance on your naturalization application (see resources below).

People who have already naturalized

In order for the government to show that a person committed fraud during the naturalization process, they have to point to something that the person did *before they naturalized* that they lied about during their naturalization process. For example, the government may claim that a person lied about *committing* a crime before they naturalized even if they were convicted of that crime after naturalizing.

If you have already naturalized, here are some things to keep in mind:

- If you are arrested for a crime, tell your criminal defense attorney that you are a naturalized citizen and want their advice on the risk of denaturalization.
 - ◆ Do **NOT** plead guilty to a crime that stretches back to before you naturalized without getting advice from your attorney.
- Be careful about "advocating" for certain groups within five years of naturalizing, particularly those labeled as terrorist organizations by the United States.
- Keep a copy of your immigration records. You can [request a copy of your immigration file from the government](#).



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Other Resources

Resources on Denaturalization

- [*Denaturalization: What You Need to Know*, Asian Law Caucus \(January 16, 2025\)](#)
 - [*Practice Advisory: Denaturalization and Revocation of Naturalization*, Immigrant Legal Resource Center and National Immigration Project \(April 7, 2020\)](#)
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Immigration Legal Assistance

You can look up free and low-cost legal services options here:

1. The [Immigration Advocates Network National Immigration Legal Services Directory](#) includes nonprofit organizations that provide free or low-cost immigration legal services.
2. The [Department of Justice's Executive Office of Immigration Review](#) publishes a list of organizations that provide free legal services to individuals who have cases in immigration courts.
3. [Immi's Legal Help Search](#) website allows you to search for nonprofit legal services in your zip code.
4. For private immigration lawyers, you can search by state using [Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project's search tool](#).

Be careful to avoid immigration scams!

- Watch [this video](#) by the Sikh Coalition in Punjabi with English subtitles.
 - Read this graphic novel by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
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If you have any additions or questions, please reach out to Amber Qureshi at amber@qureshilegal.com or Muslims for Just Futures at MuslimsforJustFutures@protonmail.com. Please note that this document is not legal advice and is provided for informational purposes only. Due to the rapidly evolving current political climate, the analysis herein is subject to change, and we will do our best to provide frequent updates.