

# Community Alert:

## Immigration Arrests at Airports

### Info from the National Immigration Law Center



*This resource provides travel safety tips and other resources for immigrants traveling through U.S. airports.*

We should all be able to travel to visit our loved ones and explore new places. But right now, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is going after immigrants in new and harmful ways. Traveling through U.S. airports can be risky, even if you have active or pending legal immigration status and/or have traveled without issues in the past. That's why it's more important than ever to know your rights and how to prepare for risks as you travel.

This resource gives travel safety tips and other resources on how to understand the risks and prepare yourself and your family.

*Disclaimer: This resource provides general information. It is not legal advice specific to your situation. We recommend that community members exercise caution and speak to an immigration lawyer about their individual cases.*

### **What's Happening**

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the government agency that handles airport security, is giving passenger information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This means people who don't have legal immigration status or whose status is uncertain could be arrested or deported when they go through airport security in the United States.

- ***How does it happen?*** A few times each week, TSA sends ICE lists of people flying through U.S. airports. These lists include names, photos, and other details. ICE checks these lists against its own records. If ICE finds someone they want to target, they can send officers to arrest that person at the airport.
- ***Isn't my private information protected?*** Normally, government agencies have rules about sharing private information. But TSA and ICE are both part of the same department – the Department of Homeland Security – so those rules don't apply here.
- ***Is ICE already arresting people at airports?*** Yes. The New York Times reported on December 12, 2025, that TSA is sharing this information with ICE. Before that, there were already reports of ICE arrests at airports. For example, on November 25, ICE detained Aissatou Diallo, a Guinean grandmother and home health aide from Queens, in LaGuardia Airport while she was travelling to visit her son.

## Who Is at Risk of Arrest by ICE at U.S. Airports?

If you are undocumented or have temporary immigration status, there is a significant risk of arrest at a U.S. airport. People with deportation orders face a particularly high risk. All non-citizens face some risk, especially people whose status is uncertain or who have risk factors we will describe here. Here is more information to help you understand your risk:

- **Old deportation orders:** If you have an old deportation order on your record, you are at high risk of arrest. This is true even if you didn't know you had an old deportation order or if the order is from when you were a child. It is also true if your deportation order is from an expedited deportation process. More than 15,000 Southeast Asians have final orders of removal, often from decades ago, and are at risk of deportation.
  - **How do you check if you have a deportation order?** If the government ever gave you paperwork with an "alien registration" number (A-number), you can check online using the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) [website](#) or by calling this hotline: 1-800-898-7180.
- **Legal status that the government revoked (or will soon revoke):** You are at high risk of arrest if you had temporary legal status, but the government has terminated, or ended, that status, including Temporary Protected Status (TPS). This includes people who entered the United States on parole, but that parole status has expired or the government has ended the parole program. For example, the government recently terminated Temporary Protected Status for [Nepal](#), and [TPS for Burma expired on March 30, 2026](#).
- **Pending applications:** ICE is arresting and detaining people even if they have submitted an application for immigration status in the United States. This means you may be at risk of arrest at an airport even if you have applied for asylum, a green card (lawful permanent residence), or other types of permanent protection. This also includes applications to change or extend your status while in the United States.
- **Any criminal history:** If you are not a U.S. citizen and have had any criminal arrests (even if the case was dropped), immigration officers may try to arrest you.
  - Immigration law counts some things as "convictions" even if you were told your case was closed or your guilty plea was withdrawn. It is best to have an immigration attorney with experience in deportation cases review your file to be sure.
- **Green card holders:** Immigration officers can still arrest green card holders if they have certain criminal convictions (even minor ones) or other risk factors. Please [review NILC's resource on this topic](#) to assess your risk.
- **DACA holders and other people with Deferred Action:** ICE has detained a number of people with Deferred Action for Certain Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. Traveling through an airport can be risky, even if you have DACA or another form of Deferred Action. For the latest information on DACA, please review this [Home is Here resource](#).

## Travel Safety Tips

- **Know your rights at the airport.**
  - Be ready for extra screenings or questions from TSA, Customs and Border Protection or other immigration law officers.
  - The ACLU has a [resource that describes what may happen](#) and explains your rights if questioned, and Just Futures Law has [additional tips and suggestions](#).
- **Bring physical copies of important documents, including:**
  - Proof of lawful status or any pending applications
  - Certified copies of criminal court orders, if your case was closed.
- **Secure your devices (phones, laptops, etc.).**
  - If you are traveling with a cell phone or other device, take steps to make it less likely law enforcement will search that device. For example, we recommend you print your ticket so you don't need to open your phone when you board the plane. You should also sign out of your email accounts.
  - You can find more detailed tips from [Freedom of the Press Foundation](#) and from [Just Futures Law](#).
- **Make a safety plan – just in case.**
  - Memorize phone numbers for a lawyer and at least one loved one who can be on-call in case you need help.
  - If you are arrested and detained, ICE will not share information about your case with anyone unless you have signed [this specific privacy waiver form](#). Consider signing one or more of these forms and leaving them with a loved one in case you are detained.
- **Special consideration for parents:**
  - ICE has a policy that says that [parents in detention have the right to make decisions about what happens to their children](#). However, ICE doesn't always follow its own policies.
  - One way to protect your children is to set up temporary guardianships so that a trusted adult or friend can take care of them if you are detained. This resource from the Children Thrive Action Network has helpful information: "[Staying Whole: A Love Letter to Immigrant Parents](#)."
- For more resources, please visit NILC's [Resource Library](#).