

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 5, 2025

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20407

Todd Lyons
Acting Director
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
500 12th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

Dear Secretary Noem and Acting Director Lyons:

We write to urge the immediate release of Leqaa Kordia, who has been detained in Prairieland Detention Center, thousands of miles away from her home in New Jersey, for more than six months because she was targeted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for participating in First Amendment protected activity. Ms. Kordia entered the country lawfully,¹ her DHS-administered Risk Classification Assessment confirmed that she has never been convicted of any crime, is not a flight risk, and poses no threat to public safety or national security.² Since being detained in March 2025, Ms. Kordia attested to horrific conditions of her detention, including severe overcrowding that has forced her to sleep on a concrete floor, among roaches and other bugs.³ Despite repeated requests, Ms. Kordia has been denied religiously appropriate meals as a practicing Muslim, specifically halal meals.⁴ By failing to provide appropriate food, ICE has forced her to choose between her religion and survival, and as of April, Ms. Kordia had lost almost fifty pounds, approximately 30% of her bodyweight.⁵ Rather than subjecting her to these horrific conditions, ICE should reserve detention for people who pose threats to public safety or national security and should immediately release Ms. Kordia so that she can seek relief from removal from her home in New Jersey.

As you know, Ms. Kordia entered the country lawfully on a B-2 tourist visa in 2016. In 2017, she adjusted status to an F-1 international student so she could study English at an academic institution.⁶ Simultaneously, her mother, a U.S. citizen, filed a family-based visa petition on Ms.

¹ Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendation of the United States Magistrate Judge, *Kordia v. Noem et. al.*, No. 3:25-cv-01072-L-BT (N.D. Tex, Dallas Div.) at 2.

² Motion for Preliminary Injunction Ordering Release Pending Final Judgment, *Kordia v. Noem et. al.*, No. 3:25-cv-01072-L-BT (N.D. Tex, Dallas Div.) at app. 72.

³ Verified Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, Request for Order to Show Cause & Complaint for Declaratory & Injunctive Relief, *Kordia v. Noem et. al.*, No. 3:25-cv-01072-L-BT (N.D. Tex, Dallas Div.) at 30.

⁴ *Id.* at 32.

⁵ *Id.* at 33.

⁶ *Id.* at 7.

Kordia's behalf, beginning the process for her to adjust to Lawful Permanent Residence status.⁷ Relying on the incorrect advice of a trusted teacher and mentor who told her that the approval of her mother's petition meant she had gained legal status, Ms. Kordia withdrew from her English program and inadvertently forfeited her F-1 visa in January 2022.⁸ Ms. Kordia believed she held legal status until ICE initiated removal proceedings against her in March 2025.⁹ On March 13, she voluntarily presented herself to allow ICE to initiate removal proceedings.¹⁰ Although her ICE-administered Risk Classification Assessment confirmed she posed no risk to public safety, was not a flight risk, and had a clean criminal history, she was nonetheless immediately detained and sent thousands of miles from her home and legal counsel to Prairieland Detention Center.¹¹

Ms. Kordia has successfully challenged her detention twice. On June 27, a Magistrate Judge recommended she be released.¹² On August 28, an Immigration Judge ordered her releasable on bond.¹³ At that hearing, DHS "conceded that Ms. Kordia had met her burden to prove her release, would not pose a danger to the community, chose not to cross-examine Ms. Kordia, and declined to present any closing argument."¹⁴ After each of these decisions, ICE swiftly asked the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) to allow for a "discretionary stay" pending the government's appeal, forcing Ms. Kordia to remain detained despite the horrific conditions at Prairieland Detention Center.

It appears that the action that brought Ms. Kordia to DHS's attention and ultimately led to her detention was that she participated in a protest on April 30, 2024, related to the war in Gaza. Ms. Kordia had a personal connection to the protest; since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war in October 2023, she lost more than 100 family members living in Gaza.¹⁵ As the record shows, she has broken no laws and has been convicted of no crimes. Her only "offenses" were an honest mistake that caused her to inadvertently lose her legal status and that she participated in a peaceful, nonviolent demonstration to mourn her loved ones and honor their lives.

Rather than punishing speech protected by the First Amendment, this Administration should be defending it, particularly when the individual is acting peacefully, has no criminal history and poses no threat to national security or public safety. We urge you to follow the recommendations of both a Magistrate Judge and an Immigration Judge and immediately release Ms. Kordia.

Sincerely,

⁷ *Id.* at 8.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 26.

¹¹ *Id.* 27

¹² Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendation of the United States Magistrate Judge, *Kordia v. Noem et. al.*, No. 3:25-cv-01072-L-BT (N.D. Tex, Dallas Div.).

¹³ Petitioner's Motion for Temporary Restraining Order on Counts II & III of Her Amended Habeas Petition, *Kordia v. Noem et. al.*, No. 3:25-cv-1072-L-BT (N.D. Tex, Dallas Div.).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 1.

¹⁵ See *Id.* at 6.



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