



Committee to Protect Journalists

October 31, 2025

*Sent via email*

Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

On behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a nonprofit, nonpartisan press freedom organization, we write to request clarification on the State Department's policies to revoke visas of foreign journalists. We are deeply concerned by a series of visa revocations impacting journalists, as well as commentators and writers. These revocations appear to be related to their reporting or speech, which are protected by the First Amendment for individuals within U.S. borders.

Most recently, British commentator Sami Hamdi was arrested at the San Francisco International airport on October 26. As of the date of this letter, Hamdi remains in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention, with no indication of a plan for his release or removal. We understand that Hamdi, a citizen of the United Kingdom, entered the United States on a valid visitor visa on October 19 for a speaking tour. ICE has reported that the Bureau of Consular Affairs revoked Hamdi's visa on October 24, after he had spent several days in the United States. Hamdi had not received notification of the revocation until his arrest by plainclothes officers when he was at the airport for a domestic flight.

In June, Australian writer and blogger Alistair Kitchen was denied entry into the United States despite being a national of a Visa Waiver Program country. Border officials at the Los Angeles International Airport searched his phone and questioned him about his views during a 12-hour detention. Earlier in March, PhD student Rümeysa Öztürk's visa was revoked for an op-ed she co-bylined in a student paper the previous year. She spent six weeks in ICE detention.

We are also concerned by related cases of visa revocations that appear related to general speech, including international students and renowned authors. CPJ believes this pattern sends a chilling message to visiting journalists that they may be denied entry, detained, or deported in retaliation for their reporting.

Mr. Secretary, as the son of immigrants from Cuba, we know you have been a fierce champion of press freedom and journalist safety globally, especially during your Senate tenure, and an outspoken critic of foreign governments that targeted and imprisoned journalists for their reporting. President Trump has also ordered that freedom of speech and eliminating state-enforced censorship is an Administration-wide priority. Therefore, it is profoundly unsettling that State Department policies may restrict the movement of journalists whose views or reporting the Administration considers unfavorable, in contrast to long-established rights-favoring norms and the role of the United States as a foremost beacon for the defense of individual liberties and human dignity at home and abroad.

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Committee to Protect Journalists

We request that your department clarify how determinations have been made to deny or revoke visas of foreign journalists in the United States. In particular:

- How does the State Department review visa applications in relation to the reporting or speech of an applicant, including protected speech under the First Amendment?
- What is the consular and administrative process to review a visa after it has been granted and/or the holder has already entered the United States legally? Does the State Department monitor visa holders and revoke their visas based on the recommendation of private individuals who are not employed by the government?
- What is the notification process and related response period for individuals already in the country when a visa is revoked?
- What is the justification for detaining visitors with revoked visas indefinitely, rather than swift deportation?
- How will the revocations impact future applications for entry from these individuals?

We look forward to your response and welcome dialogue on this topic with the relevant offices in the State Department.

Sincerely,  
Committee to Protect Journalists

CC:

John Armstrong, Senior Bureau Official, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Department of State

Riley Barnes, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Department of State

Senator James Risch, Chair, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Representative Brian Mast, Chair, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Representative Gregory Meeks, Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs