



D.C. BUREAU

FOREIGN POLICY

IMMIGRATION

President of El Salvador refuses to return wrongly deported Maryland man to the U.S.

BY: **ASHLEY MURRAY** - APRIL 14, 2025 1:57 PM

 U.S. President Donald Trump meets with President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador in the Oval Office of the White House April 14, 2025 in Washington, D.C.. (Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

WASHINGTON – El Salvador President Nayib Bukele won't return a Maryland man the United States erroneously deported to a mega-prison in his Central American country, he said Monday during a visit to the Oval Office.

Sitting beside President Donald Trump, Bukele told reporters, “Of course I’m not going to do it.”

Administration officials present for the meeting defended the deportation of Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, a native of El

Salvador who had a protective order from a U.S. immigration court shielding him from being sent back to his country because of risks to his life.

The administration [admitted](#) in court filings that it deported Abrego Garcia, of Beltsville, Maryland, by mistake.

“That’s up to El Salvador if they want to return him, that’s not up to us,” said Attorney General Pam Bondi.

“If they wanted to return him, we would facilitate it, meaning, provide a plane,” she added.

The Supreme Court issued a 9-0 decision Thursday stating the Trump administration [must “facilitate”](#) the return of Abrego Garcia.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported Abrego Garcia on March 15 among roughly 260 Venezuelan men the U.S. flew on commercial jets without due process to Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo, or CECOT.

The Trump administration is paying the El Salvador government \$6 million to detain the men, [sparking questions](#) over whether the payment violates U.S. human rights law.

Lawyers for many of the Venezuelan men maintain their clients [weren’t gang members](#).

Trump triggered the deportations under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, specifically targeting Venezuelans 14 and older who the administration suspected of having ties to the gang Tren de Aragua.

Trump also told reporters in the Oval Office Monday that he wants to export “homegrown” criminals, as in U.S. citizens, to El Salvador and would be willing to assist Bukele in building more mega prisons.

“I’d like to include them in the group of people to get them out of the country, but you’ll have to be looking at the laws on that,” said Trump.

This is a developing story that will be updated.

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