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# Despite SCOTUS Ruling, Trump Admin Refuses to Return Man It Wrongly Sent to Salvadoran Prison

By Jacob Knutson | April 14, 2025



President Donald Trump with El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele in the White House. (Pool via AP)

The Trump administration said Monday the U.S. government will not return a Maryland resident it



that the U.S. could not order El Salvador to return Abrego García.

White House aide Stephen Miller said bringing Abrego García back would constitute “kidnapping” and an “invasion of El Salvador’s sovereignty” and also falsely stated that the Supreme Court had ruled in the Trump administration’s favor.

In the meeting with Trump, Bukele, who describes himself as “the world’s coolest dictator,” scoffed at questions regarding Abrego García’s return and the Supreme Court’s ruling, saying he couldn’t “smuggle” the man back into the U.S.

The Justice Department has acknowledged in court filings that the U.S. government erred in sending Abrego Garcia to El Salvador. An immigration judge previously ruled that he should not be sent to his home country because he could be persecuted and tortured by gangs that extorted his family.

Earlier this month, a federal court in Maryland ordered the Trump administration to return Abrego García to the U.S. The order was upheld by the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The Trump administration filed an emergency petition to the Supreme Court, asking it to stay the lower court’s ruling.

The Supreme Court unanimously upheld the ruling Friday, saying it “properly requires the Government to ‘facilitate’ Abrego Garcia’s release from custody in El Salvador and to ensure that his case is handled as it would have been had he not been improperly sent to El Salvador.”

Before he was arrested, Abrego García lived in Maryland for about 15 years and has a wife and three children, all of whom are U.S. citizens. He worked as an apprentice sheet metal worker and is a member of the SMART labor union, which has denounced his arrest.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) has maintained in court filings that it interprets the Supreme Court’s order as only requiring the U.S. government to bring Abrego García back if El Salvador decides to release him.



The Trump administration is currently paying \$1 million to imprison Abrego García and hundreds of other immigrants, the vast majority of whom have no apparent criminal convictions or even criminal charges.

In their comments Monday, Bukele and Trump administration officials repeatedly referred to Abrego García as a “terrorist” and a member of MS-13, a gang Trump designated as a terrorist organization through his executive order.

The Trump administration has failed to show proof, either in public or in the courts, that Abrego García has ties to the MS-13 gang. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, citing information from a confidential informant, previously accused him of being a member of MS-13’s arm in New York — where he has never lived.

Before Trump and Bukele’s meeting formally began, Trump told the Salvadoran president that he should build additional prisons because the “home-grown are next,” referring to U.S. citizens. During the meeting, Trump again said he would like to send U.S. citizens to El Salvador.

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