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USA

FREE LEQAA KORDIA: DETAINED FOR PEACEFULLY PROTESTING

Leqaa Kordia, a 32-year-old Muslim Palestinian woman and long-time U.S. resident, was detained by immigration authorities on March 13, 2025. Her arrest followed her participation in a 2024 protest against Israel's actions in Gaza; charges from that protest were later dropped.

Leqaa was in the process of securing legal residency when she voluntarily met with immigration officials, only to be taken into custody and sent to a detention centre in Texas. While detained, her right to practise her religion has been violated.

We call for Leqaa's immediate release and for her rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to be fully respected.

Write to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security urging her office to:

- Immediately release Leqaa to her family.

Write to:

Secretary Kristi Noem

300 7th St SW,

Washington, DC 20024,

United States

Email: kristi.noem@hq.dhs.gov

Salutation: Dear Secretary Noem

And copy:

His Excellency Peter Hoekstra

Ambassador

Embassy of the United States of America

490 Sussex Drive

Ottawa, ON K1N 1G8

Tel: (613) 238-5335 / 688-5335 (24h) Fax: (613) 688-3082

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Leqaa Kordia is a 32-year-old Muslim Palestinian woman who came to the United States on a visitor visa to reunite with her mother after many years apart. She later obtained a student visa to study English, while her mother filed a family-based visa petition for her. Immigration authorities approved that petition in 2021.

Following incorrect advice, Leqaa ended her student visa, believing that the visa petition approval meant she already had legal status while waiting for her green card. This left her without lawful immigration status.

Leqaa has lost about 175 family members during Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza. Motivated by grief and solidarity, she began attending protests in New Jersey and nearby areas in 2023.

On April 30, 2024, Leqaa joined a peaceful protest outside Columbia University in New York. Police ordered demonstrators to disperse and arrested Leqaa and several others. She was released the next day, and all charges were later dismissed.

In January 2025, President Trump issued two Executive Orders calling for the arrest, detention, and deportation of non-citizens who showed support for Palestinian rights. Amnesty International condemned these orders as discriminatory and repressive.

Soon after, immigration authorities began identifying people they believed took part in pro-Palestinian protests, including Leqaa. They obtained her 2024 arrest record from the NYPD.

On March 6, 2025, immigration agents visited her mother's home and questioned her in front of Leqaa over the phone. When Leqaa later met with officials at the Newark ICE Field Office with her lawyer, she was detained on the spot—even though ICE determined she posed no threat and had no criminal history.

That night, she was transferred to Prairieland Detention Facility in Texas, far from her lawyer and family. The facility has a record of serious human rights violations.

Leqaa's immigration case is now being handled in Texas. Since April 2025, two judges have ordered her release on a \$20,000 bond, recognizing she should not remain in detention. However, ICE has blocked both orders by filing automatic and discretionary stays. She is now seeking release through federal court.

While detained, Leqaa's religious rights have been repeatedly violated. She has been served almost no halal meals, forcing her to eat food that doesn't meet her dietary requirements and causing significant weight loss.

During Ramadan, staff refused to let her save food for when she could break her fast, forcing her either to go hungry or to break her fast early. She has not been provided with clothing suitable for prayer or a clean prayer space. Staff also ignore her requests to announce when male officers enter her dorm area while she is without her hijab.

Alongside her family-based petition for permanent residency, Leqaa has filed for asylum, withholding of removal, and protection under the Convention Against Torture. Before her detention, she lived in New Jersey and cared for two close family members with health issues and disabilities.

Please take action as soon as possible until April 7, 2026 or until released. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.