

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF VERMONT**

RÜMEYSA ÖZTÜRK,
Petitioner,

v.

No. 2:25-cv-00374

DONALD J. TRUMP, et al.,
Respondents.

Declaration of Rümeysa Öztürk

I, Rümeysa Öztürk, under penalty of perjury declare as follows:

1. My name is Rümeysa Öztürk. I am 30 years old. I am a citizen of Turkey.
2. I previously submitted a declaration in this case before the District of Massachusetts. I now submit this updated declaration to explain some of my ongoing health and safety concerns and the circumstances of my detention in support of my request for bail and in the alternative for return to New England.
3. I have lived in the United States since 2018 and am currently a Ph.D student at Tufts University in the Child Study and Human Development program. I miss interacting with my Tufts community from working with my advisor and professors, supporting my labmates as we worked on peer reviews, my interactions with undergraduate students, and special projects like our Mosaic Art Project and the Collective Grieving Space for children.
4. My plans are to stay in academia and to undertake a post-doc in positive media for youth.
5. I was detained on March 25, 2025 in the early evening. I was speaking to my mother on the phone when several men approached me on the street and then surrounded me and I screamed.
6. Since appearing on the Canary Mission website in February, I had begun to be afraid that I could be targeted for violence. When the men approached me, my first thought was that they were not government officials but private individuals who wanted to harm me. I felt very scared and concerned as the men surrounded me and grabbed my phone from me.
7. I asked who they were, and they said they were the police. I asked them for badges and one showed me a gold badge but it happened so quickly I couldn't tell what it said. But I didn't think that they were the police because I had

never seen police approach and take someone away like this. I thought they were people who had doxxed me and I was afraid for my safety. They also didn't respond when I asked why and if they were arresting me. I saw a neighbor recording the scene.

8. After I was put into the car, I asked who they were, where they were taking me to, and they told me I was being arrested but they didn't say why. I began to cough as we drove. I asked for my inhaler and to open the window.
9. It was hard to see out of the window but I could see we arrived at a parking lot. There were a few cars parked. About 8-9 officers huddled together while I was waiting in the car.
10. They took me out of the car and shackled my feet and belly and then put me in the car again. I again asked to speak with my attorney, but they told me that I could not.
11. I wanted to ask questions about what was happening to me but they were scary and harsh. They asked my name but I told them I choose to remain silent. I was held in the parking lot area for about 15-20 minutes.
12. We changed cars and different officers got into the car with me. I asked for a woman officer to be with us, but they said none were around. They were all wearing civilian clothes. I thought this was a strange situation and was sure they were going to kill me.
13. We had another stop, this time in or near Lawrence, MA, in a parking lot outside of an office building. It was an isolated place which had me very concerned. I was there roughly for 15-20 minutes. We waited in the car and I asked who they are. I asked to speak with an attorney. He showed me his badge very quickly but I couldn't read it. I asked a few times if I was physically safe. He seemed to feel guilty and said "we are not monsters", "we do what the government tells us". He also warned me that what you can say can be used against you.
14. I asked them where they were taking me and they said Vermont. When I asked why, they said there are no detention centers in MA for women.
15. I had spoken to a lawyer about a week earlier because I was afraid after having been doxxed and had the lawyer's phone number with me. After being detained, I asked to speak to a lawyer several times. Each time they told me I could speak to a lawyer later. I again reminded the officers that I needed my emergency asthma inhaler close by and they kept it near me.
16. We left this place and I told them that it was close to the time for me to break my fast, and that I needed a full meal. They said they can't get me a meal but can provide me snacks. We drove for about 5-7 minutes and one of the officers went inside an office building and came out with some snacks.
17. They gave me two small packages of crackers and water but I didn't drink and eat it because I was worried they could have poisoned it. I told them I wanted

- to speak to my lawyer first before I eat. I was afraid that if something happened to me, no one would know where I was. A woman officer then joined us but we didn't speak. She appeared to avoid eye contact with me as did all the other officers. I was able to do my prayer in the car.
18. I was transported quickly to New Hampshire and believe we stopped in Lebanon at what appeared to be a police station. This is when I first thought it might be a US law enforcement agency detaining me rather than kidnappers related to the doxxing. Inside the police station I asked their names and to use the bathroom.
 19. After a short time, the officers took me to a car and I asked where they were taking me. I again asked to speak to an attorney. They told me I could at the next stop. On the drive, I again asked where they were taking me. They told me Vermont and that when we get there I could make a call.
 20. In Vermont, I asked to speak to an attorney again but was told that I could not, despite them having said before that I could call my lawyer from Vermont. They told me I would be going to another location but then I spent the night there.
 21. I stayed in a cell that had no bed but a hard bench. I asked if there was a bed and they said no. I was not able to sleep. The toilet was in the same space with basically no barrier and there was no soap. There were no other detainees there, as far as I could tell.
 22. I felt like I was going to faint and again asked for a full meal as I had fasted all day. I also had a lot of motion sickness from all the driving. They gave me some snacks.
 23. They took my biometrics, did DNA testing and then went over the NTA with me. I didn't understand some of the language they were using and asked for an interpreter. They said it was late, it was midnight, and that it was hard to find an interpreter. I refused to sign the documents.
 24. Inside the building I saw a book titled "National Detainee Handbook" written by US ICE in 2016 and asked them for the book, which they gave to me after checking if it was okay. I again told them I need my asthma and other medications.
 25. I have lived with asthma for approximately 2-3 years. My asthma causes me difficulty breathing, including when I am exposed to chemical fumes, dust, damp spaces, mold, perfumes, heavy smells as well as stress.
 26. I take medications for my asthma. I take one medication on a daily basis to prevent asthma attacks. I also keep an emergency inhaler for use during asthma attacks. I take these medications because asthma attacks can be dangerous.
 27. I estimate that I have had about 13 asthma attacks in my life. During those attacks, I feel short of breath, afraid, anxious, and physically exhausted.

28. I asked to call my attorney but they said I can't make any calls. I asked to call friends to let them know what happened. They again said I could not.
29. They said I could take some phone numbers from my phone to call from my next location. Once I did that, they had access to my phone. I have private photos of me without hejab and my loved ones on there of me and am very concerned about them having access to these.
30. They didn't let me make any calls and they asked me to put the phone into flight mode. I was so tired and scared so I agreed. It was an isolated place with four men and it was terrifying.
31. During the night they came to my cell multiple times and asked me questions about wanting to apply for asylum and if I was a member of a terrorist organization. I tried to be helpful and answer their questions but I was so tired and didn't understand what was happening to me. I asked where they were going to take me and they said Louisiana. One of them said "I hope we treated you with respect."
32. Around 4am we left for the airport and I was handcuffed again. I gave up asking to speak to a lawyer again.
33. I experienced an asthma attack while I was waiting in the Atlanta airport with ICE. I felt like I could not breathe. I asked permission to go to the restroom to use my inhaler, which I did, but I could not get over the asthma attack. I asked for the medication I am prescribed to treat asthma attacks but I was told that there was no place to buy it and that I would get it at my final destination. My asthma attack finally passed after I used my emergency inhaler twice but it took some time and I was in pain.
34. In Louisiana, myself and a few other women were taken to a processing center. I saw many women and men handcuffed and belly chained. We were placed in a cage-like vehicle and could not communicate with the officers detaining us. We waited in this place for 3-4 hours. We had no access to food or water.
35. I eventually arrived at the Louisiana facility where I am now. During the entire first week of my stay there we were not allowed to go outside. During the first two weeks, access to food and supplies was very limited because of their systems to request these items.
36. I had a second asthma attack while at the Louisiana facility. I had difficulty breathing and used the emergency inhaler but my breathing didn't improve. I asked to go to the medical center and it took them a very long time to take me there. While waiting, I was incredibly distressed as I couldn't breathe well.
37. I asked them to let me outside to get some fresh air. They said no but let me wait outside of the room in the hallway. While waiting, I still couldn't breathe well and was crying. They let me stand near the door to the outdoors to get a

- little fresh air. It took 10-15 minutes to take me to the medical center during which time I had a lot of difficulty breathing.
38. Once they finally took me to the medical center, the nurse took my temperature. She said "you need to take that thing off your head" and took off my hejab without asking my permission. I told her you can't take off my hejab and she said this is for your health. After a few minutes I put my hejab back on. But they did nothing to treat my asthma and gave me a few ibuprofen.
 39. I had a third asthma attack at the Louisiana facility. Again, this happened in the cell and other woman knocked on the window to get the attention of the officers. I was told that the nurse would come to the cell to see me. She took me outside for a short bit and told me that it was all in my mind. She finally took me to the medical center but I was not treated for my difficulty breathing. The nurse left the room and didn't answer my questions
 40. I had a fourth asthma attack on Wednesday March 9th around noon. I used my inhaler and waited for it to pass. I was in pain and very scared but I didn't ask to go to the medical center because I don't feel that they address my medical needs.
 41. I don't feel safe at the medical center because of my prior experiences there. They complain when I go there and speak to me in an insulting and condescending manner. They also write information in my medical records that is not accurate. The doctor and nurses there are rude and uncaring.
 42. I fear that my asthma is not being adequately treated and it will not be adequately treated while I remain in ICE custody. The air is full of fumes from cleaning supplies and is damp which triggers my asthma. We don't get much fresh air which also impacts my ability to breathe well.
 43. The conditions in the facility are very unsanitary, unsafe, and inhumane. There is a mouse in our cell. The boxes they provide for our clothing are very dirty and they don't give us adequate hygiene supplies.
 44. We are in a cell that has a sign stating capacity for 14 but there are 24 of us in this small space. None of us are able to sleep through the night. They come into the cell often and walk around triggering the fluorescent lights. They shout in the cell to wake up those who work in the kitchen around 3:30am each day.
 45. They wake me up for a blood sugar test at 4:15am every morning despite me asking to change the time. I have since declined to have these tests.
 46. If we need hygienic supplies like toilet paper, we may not get it until 18 hours later, depending on the officer.
 47. When they do the inmate count we are threatened to not leave our beds or we will lose privileges, which means that we are often stuck waiting in our beds for hours.

48. At mealtimes, there is so much anxiety because there is no schedule when it comes meals. They threaten to close the door if we don't leave the room in time, meaning we won't get a meal.
49. There is lack of medical care too. For example, a woman was hit on the head with a tray and fainted. It took a long time for her to be given medical attention, at least 15 minutes.
50. I still have not been provided a prayer rug or a Quran. I also requested to meet with a Muslim chaplain. I made these requests over two weeks ago. I also asked for lightweight long sleeve clothing because of the heat but have not received that.
51. I pray everyday for my release so I can go back to my home and community in Somerville. I plan to stay with a dear friend for a short while after the ordeal I have been through. I still have my apartment close to Tufts that I plan to return to.
52. I want to complete my PhD which I have been working on for the last 5 years. I only have about 9 months left to complete it and am very concerned about not being able to finish my studies.
53. I have had to delay working on my dissertation proposal because of my detention. It is very hard to access books here and it took nearly 2 weeks to get a few pieces of paper and pens.
54. I am supposed to present at a conference in Minnesota in late April/early May on character role models based on one of my PhD qualifying papers. My qualifying review is scheduled for the beginning of May which we put a lot of planning and preparation into. It will be very difficult to reschedule this process.
55. I am also concerned about my summer plans to mentor graduate and undergraduate students. I am scheduled to teach a summer class titled Introduction to Children's Media for college level high school students. I was also in the process of selecting students for an undergraduate research program this summer. I want to return to Tufts to resume all of my cherished work.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

4/10/25

Date

ss Rümeyza Öztürk
RÜMEYSA ÖZTÜRK