

June 26, 2025

Via ICE Secure Release Portal (<https://www.ice.gov/foia>)

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Freedom of Information Act Office
500 12th Street, S.W., Stop 5009
Washington, D.C. 20536-5009

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

Dear FOIA Officer:

This letter is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, et seq., submitted by the Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and Asian Refugees United (“ARU”).¹

ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

ALC is a nonprofit, public interest organization that defends the legal, civil, and human rights of Asian and Pacific Islander (“API”) and other immigrant communities. ALC works to achieve its mission through (1) provision of direct legal services, (2) strategic impact litigation, and (3) community education and organizing. Accordingly, a major component of ALC’s work is to disseminate information of public interest both to API communities and to the broader public.

ARU is a grassroots community organization that works to cultivate and restore wholeness in communities impacted by displacement, including the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from

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Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The words "**you**" or "**your**" mean the Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") Agency, as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of ICE.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records dating from January 1, 2025 to the date on which your response to this request is produced:

1. Formal and Informal Agreements: All records, including but not limited to executive agreements, memoranda, cables, record emails, exchanges of letters, or other documentation relating to informal arrangements and/or verbal agreements or other understandings between the United States and Bhutan regarding removal and/or acceptance of individuals identified as Bhutanese or Nepali nationals from January 1, 2025 to present.

2. Policies and Directives re: removals to Bhutan: All policy directives, memoranda, and/or guidance regarding removal of any noncitizen to Bhutan from January 1, 2025 to the present.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
- Electronically searchable wherever possible;
- Each paper record in a separately saved file;
- “Parent-child” relationships maintained, meaning that the Requester must be able to identify the attachments with emails;
- Any data records in native format (i.e. Excel spreadsheets in Excel);
- Emails should include BCC and any other hidden fields; and
- With any other metadata preserved.

Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, ICE’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of recent reports documenting

serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.

- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations and activities because the records will reveal what current agreements exist regarding removal between the governments of the United States and Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has responded to reports that deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iii). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.
- The contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be “significant.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iv). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and agreements governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing reports that deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(3)(i).
- If this office should deny the fee waiver for whatever reason, ALC and ARU request to be promptly notified if there are any anticipated fees that exceed \$25.00.

REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e). Expedited processing is warranted because there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations. Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration policies and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.
2. The request concerns a “matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government’s integrity which affect public confidence.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(iv). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

REQUEST FOR ROLLING PRODUCTION

We request that ICE produce responsive documents on a rolling basis as they become available during the processing of this request, rather than waiting until all documents have been reviewed before releasing any records.

If the request is denied in whole or in part, please justify all redactions by reference to specific FOIA exemptions and release all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. We reserve the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information.

We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Gon Ochi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

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Bhutanese Deportations**

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ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

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Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

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2. The word "**communication**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, letters, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
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REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records dating from January 1, 2007 to the date on which your response to this request is produced:

1. Determination of Nationality, Citizenship, Statelessness, and Country of Removal Designation: All policy directives, memoranda, and/or guidance from January 1, 2007 to the present regarding the following issues:

- a. Process or protocol to make allegations of citizenship or nationality in charging documents for removal proceedings, particularly for individuals who are or may be stateless;
- b. Assessment and documentation of statelessness, including how such findings are identified, evaluated, and incorporated into adjudication or case management;
- c. Designation of country of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2), including any procedural or evidentiary requirements to make factual or legal findings where statelessness is at issue;
- d. Determination of whether a country will "accept" an individual for removal pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2);
- e. Execution of a removal order when the designated country is unwilling or unable to accept the individual and what procedures are followed when no country has accepted removal.

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- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of the government’s processes and protocols relevant to the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has address situations in which deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
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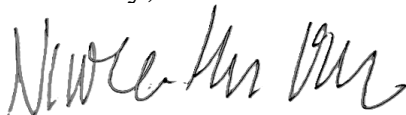
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Managing Director of Programs
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55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,



Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

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REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records:

1. Specific Removal Operations: All records and communications related to the specific removal operations to Bhutan, from 3/20/2025 to the present, including, but not limited to specific removal operations on 3/25/2025, 3/28/2025, 4/10/2025, including, but not limited to:

- a. Departure and arrival locations;
- b. Number of individuals removed;
- c. Records related to the possession and/or whereabouts of deportees' identification documents;
- d. Records of ICE personnel accompanying the deportees;
- e. All invoices, bills, receipts, money orders, and/or wire transfers whether paid or unpaid, as it relates to the specific removal operations referenced above;
- f. Communications between United States personnel and Bhutanese authorities regarding the reception and processing of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan;
- g. All records relating to any reports, debriefings, or after-action assessments prepared by ICE personnel following the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, including any documentation of issues or concerns that arose during the removal process.

2. Processing and Removal Operations

- a. All records and communications relating to any policies, procedures, or protocols for the handling of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals during the removal process, including any special procedures for individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees.

b. All records and communications relating to the processing of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals for removal from the United States at the following facilities:

- i. Pike County Correctional Facility (Pennsylvania);
- ii. Moshannon Valley ICE Processing Center (Pennsylvania);
- iii. Elizabeth Detention Center (New Jersey);
- iv. Butler County Correctional Complex (Ohio);
- v. Kandiyohi County Jail (Minnesota);
- vi. Montgomery Processing Center (Texas);
- vii. South Texas Detention Facility;
- viii. Oldham County Detention Center (Kentucky);
- ix. Tacoma Northwest Detention Center (Washington);
- x. Lakeview Shock Correctional Facility (New York);
- xi. Northwest State Correctional Facility (Vermont);
- xii. Broadview Processing Center (Illinois);
- xiii. Clinton County Correctional Facility (Pennsylvania).

c. All records and communications relating to the processing of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals at ports of departure during removal operations, including, but not limited to:

- i. Records documenting the verification of travel documents for deportees who are Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
- ii. Records relating to the embarkation procedures for Bhutanese or Nepali individuals being removed from the United States to Bhutan;
- iii. Records documenting any concerns or issues raised during the pre-departure processing of deportees who are Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
- iv. Communications and records documenting any information with regards to coordinating with ICE regarding deportees identified as Bhutanese nationals;
- v. Communications and records documenting any information with regards to coordinating with local law enforcement agencies regarding deportees identified as Bhutanese nationals.

- d. All records and communications relating to the coordination between ICE and commercial airlines or charter flight operators regarding the transportation of deportees who are Bhutanese or Nepali individuals:
 - i. Agreements or arrangements with air carriers for the transportation of deportees who are Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
 - ii. Communications regarding the scheduling and logistics of flights carrying deportees who are Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
 - iii. Records documenting any special security measures or procedures implemented for flights carrying deportees who are Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
 - iv. All invoices, bills, receipts, whether paid or unpaid, as it relates to the transport, detention, custody, repatriation, and removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States.

- e. All records and communications relating to the training or briefing of ICE personnel accompanying deportees identified as Bhutanese nationals during removal flights, including:
 - i. Instructions regarding the handling of deportees during the flight;
 - ii. Guidance regarding the transfer of custody to Bhutanese authorities;
 - iii. Protocols for addressing any issues or concerns that might arise during the removal process.

- f. Communications and After-Action Reports
 - i. All records relating to any communications between ICE personnel and Bhutanese authorities regarding the reception and processing of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan;
 - ii. All records relating to any communications between United States Customs and Border Patrol (“CBP”) personnel and U.S. local, national, and federal law enforcement authorities regarding the reception and processing of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan;
 - iii. All records relating to any reports, debriefings, or after-action assessments prepared by CBP personnel following the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States,

including any documentation of issues or concerns that arose during the removal process.

3. Policies and Directives: All policy directives, memoranda, guidance documents, emails, text messages, or other records with the following terms: Bhutan; Bhutanese; Stateless; or Statelessness from January 1, 2024 to the present.

4. Communications and Coordination: All records and communications from January 1, 2025 to the present relating to the following:

- a. All records, briefing materials, meeting schedules, and/or meeting notes relating to any communication since January 20, 2024 between the United States and the governments of Bhutan, Nepal, and/or India regarding the removal and/or repatriation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States;
- b. All communications, including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, fax messages, invoices, letters, memos, reports and diplomatic notes, between U.S. officials and Bhutanese officials regarding the admission, entry, acceptance, status, and treatment of deportees from the United States upon arrival in Bhutan;
- c. All records concerning the Bhutanese government's treatment of deportees after their arrival in Bhutan, including, but not limited to, any reports or communications, regarding deportees being transferred to third countries such as India, or Nepal;
- d. All records, including, but not limited to, emails, text messages, letters, memos, invoices, fax messages, diplomatic notes, relating to the transportation of deportees from Bhutan to India or Nepal following their removal from the United States, including, but not limited to, all records with the following terms: Bhutan, India, or Nepal;
- e. All financial records, including, but not limited to, invoices and receipts, sent or received by the United States government to or from the Bhutanese government regarding Bhutanese or Nepalese individuals who were removed, repatriated, and/or voluntarily deported from the United States to Bhutan, India, and/or Nepal.

5. Statistical Information and Data

- a. All reports and/or summaries reflecting the number of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals with final orders of removal as of the date on which your response to this request is produced;
- b. All reports and/or summaries reflecting the total number of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been removed from the United States since January 20, 2024, including the date of their removal.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
- Electronically searchable wherever possible;
- Each paper record in a separately saved file;
- “Parent-child” relationships maintained, meaning that the Requester must be able to identify the attachments with emails;
- Any data records in native format (i.e. Excel spreadsheets in Excel);
- Emails should include BCC and any other hidden fields; and
- With any other metadata preserved.

Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, ICE’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of recent reports documenting

serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.

- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations and activities because the records will reveal key information regarding removal between the governments of the United States and Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has responded to reports that deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iii). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.
- The contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be “significant.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iv). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and agreements governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing reports that deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(3)(i).
- If this office should deny the fee waiver for whatever reason, ALC and ARU request to be promptly notified if there are any anticipated fees that exceed \$25.00.

REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e). Expedited processing is warranted because there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations.

Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration policies and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.
2. The request concerns a “matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government’s integrity which affect public confidence.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(iv). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

REQUEST FOR ROLLING PRODUCTION

We request that ICE produce responsive documents on a rolling basis as they become available during the processing of this request, rather than waiting until all documents have been reviewed before releasing any records.

If the request is denied in whole or in part, please justify all redactions by reference to specific FOIA exemptions and release all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. We reserve the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information.

We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

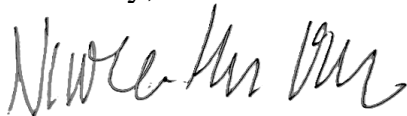
If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Gon Ochi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicole" being the most prominent.

Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via DOS Public Access Link (<https://foia.state.gov/>)

U.S. Department of State
Information Access Liaison Office, A/SKS/IAP/IAL
2201 C Street N.W., Suite B266
Washington, D.C. 20520-0000

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

Dear FOIA Officer:

This letter is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, et seq., submitted by the Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and Asian Refugees United (“ARU”).¹

ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

ALC is a nonprofit, public interest organization that defends the legal, civil, and human rights of Asian and Pacific Islander (“API”) and other immigrant communities. ALC works to achieve its mission through (1) provision of direct legal services, (2) strategic impact litigation, and (3) community education and organizing. Accordingly, a major component of ALC’s work is to disseminate information of public interest both to API communities and to the broader public.

ARU is a grassroots community organization that works to cultivate and restore wholeness in communities impacted by displacement, including the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from

¹ ARU is fiscally sponsored by Chinese for Affirmative Action, d/b/a Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality (“AARCE”).

Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The words "**you**" or "**your**" mean the Department of State ("DOS"), as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of DOS.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records dating from January 1, 2025 to the date on which your response to this request is produced:

1. Formal and Informal Agreements: All records, including but not limited to executive agreements, memoranda, cables, record emails, exchanges of letters, or other documentation relating to informal arrangements and/or verbal agreements or other understandings between the United States and Bhutan regarding removal and/or acceptance of individuals identified as Bhutanese or Nepali nationals from January 1, 2025 to present.

2. Policies and Directives re: removals to Bhutan: All policy directives, memoranda, and/or guidance regarding removal of any noncitizen to Bhutan from January 1, 2025 to the present.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
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Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of

recent reports documenting serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.

- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations and activities because the records will reveal what current agreements exist regarding removal between the governments of the United States and Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has responded to reports that deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records would be “meaningfully informative about government operations or activities.” 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(ii)(A). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and agreements governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing reports that deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(ii)(B). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.
- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(iii).
- If this office should deny the fee waiver for whatever reason, ALC and ARU request to be promptly notified if there are any anticipated fees that exceed \$25.00.

REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 22 C.F.R. § 171.12(d). Expedited processing is warranted because there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations. Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 22 C.F.R. § 171.12(d)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration policies and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.

2. The failure to release such information “would impair substantial due process rights or harm substantial humanitarian interests.” 22 C.F.R. § 171.12(d)(1)(iii). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

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We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,

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Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via DOS Public Access Link (<https://foia.state.gov/>)

U.S. Department of State
Information Access Liaison Office, A/SKS/IAP/IAL
2201 C Street N.W., Suite B266
Washington, D.C. 20520-0000

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Bhutanese Deportations**

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Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**communication**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, letters, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.

4. The words "**you**" or "**your**" mean the Department of State ("DOS"), as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of DOS.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the Department of State's involvement in the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records:

1. Diplomatic Communications and Records with Bhutan

All communications, records, diplomatic cables, record emails, diplomatic notes, memoranda of conversation, meeting minutes, briefing papers, and any other records relating to communications between the United States government and the Royal Government of Bhutan from January 1, 2024 to the present regarding:

- a. Bhutan's inclusion on a draft list of countries whose citizens may be barred from traveling to the United States;
- b. Threats of sanctions on Bhutan if they do not accept Bhutanese or Nepali individuals subject to removal from the United States;
- c. The acceptance or repatriation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States;
- d. The verification of nationality for individuals subject to removal from the United States;
- c. The issuance of travel documents or other identity documents for individuals identified as Bhutanese nationals ordered removed from the United States;
- d. The treatment of deportees upon their return to Bhutan;
- e. Any concerns raised by U.S. officials regarding the expulsion of deportees from Bhutan to India, Nepal, and/or any other country.

2. Diplomatic Communications and Records with Nepal

All communications, records, diplomatic cables, record emails, diplomatic notes, memoranda of conversation, meeting minutes, briefing papers, and any other records relating to communications between the United States government and the Government of Nepal from January 1, 2024 to the present regarding:

- a. The status of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal;
- b. The treatment of deportees who have been expelled from Bhutan to Nepal;

- c. Any requests for Nepal to accept individuals identified as Bhutanese nationals who have been ordered removed from the United States;
- d. Nepal's detention or treatment of individuals who entered Nepal after being deported from the United States and expelled from Bhutan.

3. Diplomatic Communications and Records with India

All communications, records, diplomatic cables, record emails, diplomatic notes, memoranda of conversation, meeting minutes, briefing papers, and any other records relating to communications between the United States government and the Government of India from January 1, 2024 to the present regarding:

- a. The status of Bhutanese refugees in India;
- b. The treatment of deportees who have been expelled from Bhutan to India;
- c. Any requests for India to accept individuals identified as Bhutanese nationals who have been ordered removed from the United States;
- d. The transit of deportees through Indian territory after their expulsion from Bhutan;
- e. India's role in facilitating or addressing the situation of deportees who have been expelled from Bhutan;
- f. The presence of deportees in India who remain in hiding or without legal status after expulsion from Bhutan.

4. Communications with International Organizations: All records and communications between U.S. diplomatic personnel and representatives of international organizations (including but not limited to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration, or human rights monitoring bodies) with any of the following terms: Bhutan; Bhutanese; Stateless; Statelessness from January 1, 2024 to the present.

5. INHURED International Correspondence: All records of meetings, communications, or other interactions between U.S. officials and representatives of INHURED International, particularly regarding their April 7, 2025 letter to the U.S. Ambassador to Nepal concerning the expulsion of deportees identified as Bhutanese nationals to India and Nepal.

6. Policy Development and Implementation

- a. All records and communications relating to the development, consideration, or implementation of U.S. policy regarding the deportation of individuals identified as Bhutanese nationals, including but not limited to interagency communications, policy papers, decision memoranda, and briefing materials from January 1, 2024 to present.
- b. All records relating to the U.S. government's awareness of, and response to, reports that deportees were being expelled from Bhutan to India or Nepal, from January 1, 2024 to present, including but not limited to:
 - i. Internal assessments or analyses of these reports;
 - ii. Communications with Bhutanese officials regarding these reports;
 - iii. Any policy changes or diplomatic initiatives undertaken in response to these reports.
- c. All records and communications relating to consultations with international organizations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ("UNHCR"), regarding the situation of deportees.

7. Human Rights Assessments and Country Conditions: All human rights assessments, country condition reports, or similar analyses prepared or reviewed by the Department of State from January 1, 2025 to the present concerning:

- a. The treatment of ethnic Nepali Bhutanese (also known as Lhotshampa) individuals in Bhutan;
- b. Bhutan's treatment of deported Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
- c. Conditions facing stateless persons in Bhutan, Nepal, or India;
- d. The United State's human rights obligations under international treaties; conventions, or protocols, customary international law or soft law obligations.

8. Reports and Assessments: All reports, summaries, briefing materials, or other records prepared by the Department of State, including but not limited to U.S. embassy personnel in Bhutan, Nepal, or India from January 1, 2025 to the present regarding:

- a. The arrival of deportees identified as Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States;

- b. The handling of identification documents for these individuals;
- c. The treatment of these deportees by Bhutanese authorities;
- d. The expulsion or transfer of these deportees to India or Nepal.

This request encompasses records created, received, or maintained by the Department of State, U.S. embassies or consulates in Bhutan, Nepal, and India, and any other U.S. government agencies or offices engaged in diplomatic communications with these countries regarding the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
- Electronically searchable wherever possible;
- Each paper record in a separately saved file;
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Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of

recent reports documenting serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.

- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations and activities because the records will reveal key information regarding removal between the governments of the United States and Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has responded to reports that deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records would be “meaningfully informative about government operations or activities.” 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(ii)(A). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and agreements governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing situation in which deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(ii)(B). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.
- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 22 C.F.R. § 171.16(j)(2)(iii).
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ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 22 C.F.R. § 171.12(d). Expedited processing is warranted because

there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations. Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 22 C.F.R. § 171.12(d)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration policies and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.
2. The failure to release such information “would impair substantial due process rights or harm substantial humanitarian interests.” 22 C.F.R. § 171.12(d)(1)(iii). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

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We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

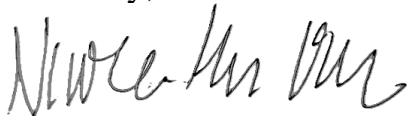
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Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Gon Ochi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicole" being the most prominent.

Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via DHS Secure Release Portal (<https://www.dhs.gov/foia>)

Privacy Office, Mail Stop 0655
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20528-065

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

Dear FOIA Officer:

This letter is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, et seq., submitted by the Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and Asian Refugees United (“ARU”).¹

ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

ALC is a nonprofit, public interest organization that defends the legal, civil, and human rights of Asian and Pacific Islander (“API”) and other immigrant communities. ALC works to achieve its mission through (1) provision of direct legal services, (2) strategic impact litigation, and (3) community education and organizing. Accordingly, a major component of ALC’s work is to disseminate information of public interest both to API communities and to the broader public.

ARU is a grassroots community organization that works to cultivate and restore wholeness in communities impacted by displacement, including the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from

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Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The words "**you**" or "**your**" mean the Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"), as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of DHS.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records dating from January 1, 2025 to the date on which your response to this request is produced:

1. Formal and Informal Agreements: All records, including but not limited to executive agreements, memoranda, cables, record emails, exchanges of letters, or other documentation relating to informal arrangements and/or verbal agreements or other understandings between the United States and Bhutan regarding removal and/or acceptance of individuals identified as Bhutanese or Nepali nationals from January 1, 2025 to present.

2. Policies and Directives re: removals to Bhutan: All policy directives, memoranda, and/or guidance regarding removal of any noncitizen to Bhutan from January 1, 2025 to the present.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
- Electronically searchable wherever possible;
- Each paper record in a separately saved file;
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- Any data records in native format (i.e. Excel spreadsheets in Excel);
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Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of recent reports

documenting serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.

- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations and activities because the records will reveal what current agreements exist regarding removal between the governments of the United States and Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has responded to reports that deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iii). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.
- The contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be “significant.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iv). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and agreements governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing reports that deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(3)(i).
- If this office should deny the fee waiver for whatever reason, ALC and ARU request to be promptly notified if there are any anticipated fees that exceed \$25.00.

REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e). Expedited processing is warranted because there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations. Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration policies and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.
2. The request concerns a “matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government’s integrity which affect public confidence.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(iv). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

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If the request is denied in whole or in part, please justify all redactions by reference to specific FOIA exemptions and release all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. We reserve the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information.

We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

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Managing Director of Programs
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REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records dating from January 1, 2007 to the date on which your response to this request is produced:

1. Determination of Nationality, Citizenship, Statelessness, and Country of Removal Designation: All policy directives, memoranda, and/or guidance from January 1, 2007 to the present regarding the following issues:

- a. Process or protocol to make allegations of citizenship or nationality in charging documents for removal proceedings, particularly for individuals who are or may be stateless;
- b. Assessment and documentation of statelessness, including how such findings are identified, evaluated, and incorporated into adjudication or case management;
- c. Designation of country of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2), including any procedural or evidentiary requirements to make factual or legal findings where statelessness is at issue;
- d. Determination of whether a country will "accept" an individual for removal pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2);
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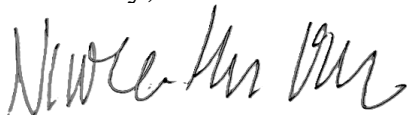
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Nicole Gon Ochi
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June 26, 2025

Via EOIR Public Access Link (<https://foia.eoir.justice.gov/>)

Office of the General Counsel
Attn: FOIA Service Center
Executive Office for Immigration Review
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2150
Falls Church, VA 22041

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Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

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- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(2)(ii)(B). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.
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We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Gon Ochi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via EOIR Public Access Link (<https://foia.eoir.justice.gov/>)

Office of the General Counsel
Attn: FOIA Service Center
Executive Office for Immigration Review
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2150
Falls Church, VA 22041

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

Dear FOIA Officer:

This letter is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, et seq., submitted by the Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and Asian Refugees United (“ARU”).¹

ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

ALC is a nonprofit, public interest organization that defends the legal, civil, and human rights of Asian and Pacific Islander (“API”) and other immigrant communities. ALC works to achieve its mission through (1) provision of direct legal services, (2) strategic impact litigation, and (3) community education and organizing. Accordingly, a major component of ALC’s work is to disseminate information of public interest both to API communities and to the broader public.

ARU is a grassroots community organization that works to cultivate and restore wholeness in communities impacted by displacement, including the Nepali-speaking

¹ ARU is fiscally sponsored by Chinese for Affirmative Action, d/b/a Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality (“AARCE”).

Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**communication**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, letters, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records

or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.

4. The words "you" or "your" mean the Executive Office for Immigration Review ("EOIR"), as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of ICE.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to immigration court proceedings involving Bhutanese or Nepali individuals, we seek any and all of the following records:

Statistical Information

1. All statistical information regarding removal proceedings involving individuals identified as Bhutanese nationals, including but not limited to:
 - a. The total number of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed from the United States between January 1, 2020, and the present;
 - b. The countries designated for removal in these orders;
 - c. The bases for removal (e.g., criminal convictions, immigration violations);
 - d. The number of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who applied for asylum, withholding of removal, or protection under the Convention Against Torture, and the outcomes of these applications.

Policies and Guidance

2. All communications, memoranda, guidance documents, or other records including the terms "Bhutan," "Bhutanese," "stateless," or "statelessness" dating from January 1, 2020 to the present, including any documents regarding:
 - a. The adjudication of cases involving Bhutanese or Nepali individuals, particularly those who entered the United States through the refugee resettlement program;
 - b. The designation of countries of removal for Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are subject to final orders of removal;

- c. Any policies, practices, or considerations specifically relating to assessment and documentation of statelessness, and/or determination of citizenship or nationality in cases where these may be unclear or in dispute, in removal and/or asylum proceedings, including how such findings are identified, evaluated, and incorporated into adjudication or case management;
- d. Designation of country of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2), including any procedural or evidentiary requirements to make factual or legal findings where statelessness is at issue;
- e. Determination of whether a country will “accept” an individual for removal pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2);
- f. Execution of a removal order when the designated country is unwilling or unable to accept the individual and what procedures are followed when no country has accepted removal.

Training and Resources

- 3. All training materials, legal research memos, country condition reports, or other resources provided to Immigration Judges regarding:
 - a. The treatment of ethnic Nepali individuals (also known as Lhotshampa) in Bhutan;
 - b. Conditions facing stateless individuals in Bhutan, Nepal, or India;
 - c. Any changes in conditions in Bhutan that might affect the adjudication of protection claims by Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
 - d. Assessment and documentation of statelessness in removal and/or asylum proceedings, including how such findings are identified, evaluated, and incorporated into adjudication or case management;
 - e. Designation of country of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2), including any procedural or evidentiary requirements to make factual or legal findings where statelessness is at issue;
 - f. Determination of whether a country will “accept” an individual for removal pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2);
 - g. Execution of a removal order when the designated country is unwilling or unable to accept the individual and what procedures are followed when no country has accepted removal.

Motions to Reopen

4. All records relating to motions to reopen filed by Bhutanese or Nepali individuals since January 1, 2020, including:
 - a. The number of such motions filed;
 - b. The bases for such motions (e.g., changed country conditions, ineffective assistance of counsel);
 - c. The outcomes of such motions.

Stay Orders and Interagency Communications

5. All records related to the issuance of stay orders for Bhutanese or Nepali individuals with final orders of removal since January 1, 2020, including any communications between EOIR and Immigration Customs and Enforcement regarding such stay requests.
6. All records of any communications between EOIR officials and officials from the Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, or other government agencies with the term “Bhutan” or “Bhutanese” since January 1, 2020.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
- Electronically searchable wherever possible;
- Each paper record in a separately saved file;
- “Parent-child” relationships maintained, meaning that the Requester must be able to identify the attachments with emails;
- Any data records in native format (i.e. Excel spreadsheets in Excel);
- Emails should include BCC and any other hidden fields; and
- With any other metadata preserved.

Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, policies and protocols relevant to the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of recent reports documenting serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.
- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations and activities because the records will reveal what current policies and protocols exist regarding removal between the governments of the United States and Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has responded to situations in which deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records would be “meaningfully informative about government operations or activities.” 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(2)(ii)(A). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing circumstances in which deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(2)(ii)(B). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking

Bhutanese community about government policies and their impact on the impacted community.

- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(2)(iii).
- If this office should deny the fee waiver for whatever reason, ALC and ARU request to be promptly notified if there are any anticipated fees that exceed \$25.00.

REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e). Expedited processing is warranted because there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations. Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged Federal Government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration processes and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.
2. The request concerns a “matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government’s integrity which affect public confidence.” 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(iv). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

REQUEST FOR ROLLING PRODUCTION

We request that EOIR produce responsive documents on a rolling basis as they become available during the processing of this request, rather than waiting until all documents have been reviewed before releasing any records.

If the request is denied in whole or in part, please justify all redactions by reference to specific FOIA exemptions and release all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. We reserve the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information.

We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,



Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via CBP Secure Release Portal (<https://www.cbp.gov/site-policy-notices/foia>)

Freedom of Information Act Office
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Mail Stop 1181
Washington, D.C 20229-1181

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

Dear FOIA Officer:

This letter is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, et seq., submitted by the Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and Asian Refugees United (“ARU”).¹

ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

ALC is a nonprofit, public interest organization that defends the legal, civil, and human rights of Asian and Pacific Islander (“API”) and other immigrant communities. ALC works to achieve its mission through (1) provision of direct legal services, (2) strategic impact litigation, and (3) community education and organizing. Accordingly, a major component of ALC’s work is to disseminate information of public interest both to API communities and to the broader public.

ARU is a grassroots community organization that works to cultivate and restore wholeness in communities impacted by displacement, including the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from

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Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**communication**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, letters, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.

4. The words "**you**" or "**your**" mean the Customs and Border Protection ("CBP") Agency, as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of CBP.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records dating from January 1, 2007 to the date on which your response to this request is produced:

1. Determination of Nationality, Citizenship, Statelessness, and Country of Removal Designation: All policy directives, memoranda, and/or guidance from January 1, 2007 to the present regarding the following issues:

- a. Process or protocol to make allegations of citizenship or nationality in charging documents for removal proceedings, particularly for individuals who are or may be stateless;
- b. Assessment and documentation of statelessness, including how such findings are identified, evaluated, and incorporated into adjudication or case management;
- c. Designation of country of removal under 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2), including any procedural or evidentiary requirements to make factual or legal findings where statelessness is at issue;
- d. Determination of whether a country will "accept" an individual for removal pursuant to 8 U.S.C. § 1231(b)(2);
- e. Execution of a removal order when the designated country is unwilling or unable to accept the individual and what procedures are followed when no country has accepted removal.

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- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of the government’s processes and protocols relevant to the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has address situations in which deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iii). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government processes and their impact on the impacted community.
- The contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be “significant.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iv). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and protocols governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in

understanding how the U.S. government is addressing situations in which deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public's understanding of these issues.

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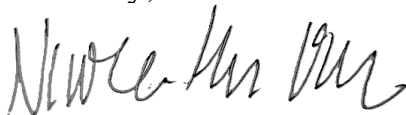
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Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,



Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via USCIS FOIA Portal (<https://first.uscis.gov>)

National Records Center, FOIA/PA Office
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
P. O. Box 648010
Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

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- With any other metadata preserved.

Request for Fee Waiver

ALC and ARU seek a waiver of document search, review, and duplication fees on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and is “likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). This request meets the criteria for a fee waiver established by regulation:

- The request concerns “the operations or activities of the government”—specifically, processes and protocols relevant to the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, many of whom were previously admitted to the United States as refugees. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(i). The request is particularly timely and relevant in light of recent reports documenting serious human rights concerns regarding the treatment of deportees upon their return.
- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of the government’s processes and protocols relevant to the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has address situations in which deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
- Disclosure of the records will contribute to the understanding of “the public at large” because ALC and ARU intends to disseminate the information broadly. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iii). ALC regularly disseminates information regarding deportation issues and other immigrant rights issues to the public through community alerts, written media, and social media; ARU regularly disseminates information in-language to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community about government processes and their impact on the impacted community.
- The contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be “significant.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iv). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and protocols governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in

understanding how the U.S. government is addressing situations in which deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public's understanding of these issues.

- As nonprofit organizations that educate the public at no charge, ALC and ARU have no commercial interest in this request. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(3)(i).
- If this office should deny the fee waiver for whatever reason, ALC and ARU request to be promptly notified if there are any anticipated fees that exceed \$25.00.

REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

ALC requests expedited processing of this FOIA request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e). Expedited processing is warranted because there is a “compelling need” for these records, as defined in the statute and regulations. Specifically:

1. There is an “urgency to inform the public about an actual or alleged federal government activity” by an organization “primarily engaged in disseminating information.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(ii). As described above, ALC and ARU regularly disseminate information to the public about immigration processes and their impact on affected communities. The requested information concerns an ongoing federal government activity—the deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who are former refugees—about which there is limited public information. Recent media reports have documented serious concerns about the treatment of deportees upon arrival in Bhutan, including allegations that they are being immediately expelled to third countries where they have no legal status. The public has a strong interest in understanding these practices and the agreements that govern them.
2. The request concerns a “matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government’s integrity which affect public confidence.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.5(e)(1)(iv). The deportation of individuals who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees, and their subsequent expulsion from their country of nationality, raises significant questions about the U.S. government’s compliance with international and domestic legal obligations regarding non-refoulement and the status and protection of stateless persons. These issues have been covered

in major media outlets including [The New York Times](#), [The Diplomat](#), and [Deutsche Welle](#).

REQUEST FOR ROLLING PRODUCTION

We request that USCIS produce responsive documents on a rolling basis as they become available during the processing of this request, rather than waiting until all documents have been reviewed before releasing any records.

If the request is denied in whole or in part, please justify all redactions by reference to specific FOIA exemptions and release all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. We reserve the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information.

We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

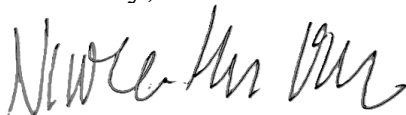
If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,



Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus

June 26, 2025

Via USCIS FOIA Portal (<https://first.uscis.gov>)

National Records Center, FOIA/PA Office
United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
P. O. Box 648010
Lee's Summit, MO 64064-8010

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request Regarding Policies Related to
Bhutanese Deportations**

Dear FOIA Officer:

This letter is a request under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, et seq., submitted by the Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and Asian Refugees United (“ARU”).¹

ALC and ARU seek documents regarding the identification, detention, and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals who have been ordered to be removed from the United States to Bhutan. This information is of particular interest to ALC, ARU, and its constituencies to inform our understanding of the risks faced by Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees who were previously admitted to the United States as refugees through formal resettlement programs and now have been or may be deported to statelessness.

ALC is a nonprofit, public interest organization that defends the legal, civil, and human rights of Asian and Pacific Islander (“API”) and other immigrant communities. ALC works to achieve its mission through (1) provision of direct legal services, (2) strategic impact litigation, and (3) community education and organizing. Accordingly, a major component of ALC’s work is to disseminate information of public interest both to API communities and to the broader public.

ARU is a grassroots community organization that works to cultivate and restore wholeness in communities impacted by displacement, including the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community that was stripped of their citizenship and expelled from

¹ ARU is fiscally sponsored by Chinese for Affirmative Action, d/b/a Asian Americans for Civil Rights and Equality (“AARCE”).

Bhutan during a state-led ethnic cleaning campaign in the 1990s. ARU's ongoing programs include community wellness, arts/storytelling, education, and civic engagement to engage and develop leadership within young immigrants and refugees. Many of the ARU staff based in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania are part of the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and have become the national resource to address the sudden increase in arrests, detentions, and deportations that began in March 2025. The deportation of community members is an issue of public interest and ARU is committed to disseminating information about these removals to the Nepali-speaking Bhutanese community and the broader public.

DEFINITIONS

1. The phrase "**Bhutanese or Nepali individuals**" herein refers to individuals born in Bhutan or Nepal, persons of Nepali-origin or descent, refugees from Nepal or Bhutan, and/or individuals identified in government documents, whether correctly or incorrectly, as Bhutanese nationals or Bhutanese citizens.
2. The word "**communication**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, letters, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.
3. The word "**record**" means any kind of written, printed, typed, recorded or graphic matter, however produced or reproduced, of any kind or description, whether sent or received or neither, including originals, copies and drafts and both sides thereof, and including but not limited to papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets, newspaper articles or clippings, publications, letters, photographs, objects, tangible things, correspondence, telegrams, inter-office communications, inter-departmental communications, text messages, emails, transcripts, minutes, memoranda, reports and recordings of telephone or other conversations, or of interview, or of conferences, or of affidavits, statements, summaries, opinions, reports, video or audio recordings, film, all other records or information kept by electronic, photographic, mechanical or other means, and things similar to any of the foregoing, however denominated.

4. The words "**you**" or "**your**" mean the Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") Agency, as well as all other persons acting or purporting to act on behalf of USCIS.

REQUEST FOR RECORDS

With regards to the removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States, we seek any and all of the following records:

1. Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Program Records

All records relating to the Bhutanese refugee resettlement program from January 1, 2007 to the present, including, but not limited to:

- a. Policies, procedures, and guidance documents regarding the processing and admission of Bhutanese refugees;
- b. Records documenting the total number of Bhutanese refugees resettled in the United States, including demographic information and settlement locations;
- c. Any evaluations, assessments, or reviews of the Bhutanese refugee resettlement program.

2. Status Adjustment and Revocation Policies

All records, including the policies, memoranda, guidance documents, or other records from January 1, 2007 to the present regarding:

- a. The handling of adjustment of status applications filed by Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
- b. The revocation and/or termination of refugee status for Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
- c. The effect of criminal convictions on the immigration status of individuals admitted as refugees.

3. Interagency Communications

All communications between the USCIS and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") from January 1, 2024 to the present with the terms "Bhutan" or "Bhutanese" regarding:

- a. The identification of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals with criminal convictions or removal orders;
- b. The coordination of enforcement actions regarding targeting Bhutanese or Nepali individuals;
- c. The verification of immigration status for Bhutanese or Nepali individuals subject to ICE enforcement actions;
- d. All invoices, bill, receipts, whether paid or not paid, as it relates to the detention, custody and removal of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals from the United States.

4. Training and Educational Materials

All records and communications relating to any presentations, briefings, or training materials prepared by or for USCIS personnel from January 1, 2024 to the present regarding:

- a. The status of the Bhutanese refugee population in the United States;
- b. Information regarding potential and/or actual statelessness affecting the Bhutanese refugee population;
- c. Country conditions in Bhutan relevant to refugee or asylum claims by Bhutanese or Nepali individuals.

5. Refugee Camp Birth Documentation

All records and communications relating to the processing of refugee status for individuals born in refugee camps in Nepal to parents who fled or were expelled from Bhutan, including any policies or guidance regarding their nationality designation.

6. International Coordination

All records and communications relating to USCIS's coordination with the Department of State or international organizations regarding the Bhutanese refugee population in the United States from January 1, 2024 to the present, including any records concerning the "Bhutanese Resettlement Commitment" or similar policies providing protection to resettled Bhutanese refugees.

7. Policies, Directives and Policy Changes

- a. All records and communications relating to any changes in USCIS policy or practice regarding Bhutanese refugees that occurred on or after January 20, 2025;
- b. All policy directives, memoranda, and guidance documents from January 20, 2020 to the present regarding stateless persons or noncitizens, and statelessness.

Format of Production

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics, and including electronic records. Please provide the requested documents in the following format:

- Provided via email or on a CD, DVD, hard drive, or other hardcopy media;
- In PDF format wherever possible;
- Electronically searchable wherever possible;
- Each paper record in a separately saved file;
- “Parent-child” relationships maintained, meaning that the Requester must be able to identify the attachments with emails;
- Any data records in native format (i.e. Excel spreadsheets in Excel);
- Emails should include BCC and any other hidden fields; and
- With any other metadata preserved.

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- Disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of the government’s processes and protocols relevant to the government’s detention and deportation of Bhutanese or Nepali individuals ordered removed to Bhutan, and how the U.S. government has address situations in which deportees are facing expulsion to third countries upon their return. 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(ii).
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- The contribution to public understanding of government operations or activities will be “significant.” 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(iv). As of today, very little public information is available regarding the processes and protocols governing the removal of Bhutanese and Nepali individuals who entered the United States as refugees. Moreover, there is significant public interest in understanding how the U.S. government is addressing situations in which deportees are being expelled from Bhutan shortly after their arrival. Therefore, the requested records will greatly enhance the public’s understanding of these issues.
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We look forward to receiving your response regarding our expedited processing request within ten days, as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(ii)(I).

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. Please direct all questions regarding this request to Nicole Gon Ochi by phone at (415) 335-9781 or by email at nicoleo@asianlawcaucus.org.

If any records are available in electronic form, please provide them in electronic form.

Please mail all non-electronic records to:

Nicole Gon Ochi
Managing Director of Programs
Asian Law Caucus
55 Columbus Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94111

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Gon Ochi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicole" being the most prominent.

Nicole Gon Ochi
Asian Law Caucus