

NEWS

# At least 6 immigration judges fired in NYC amid huge backlog of cases, union says



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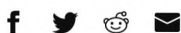


By Arya Sundaram

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At least six immigration judges in New York City have been fired in recent months as part of a nationwide purge — with some terminated as recently as last week — according to the National Association of Immigration Judges union.

Over 80 immigration judges have been fired nationwide since President Donald Trump returned to the White House on Jan. 20, according to the union, with most not receiving any reason for their firings.

The union says the number of firings in such a short time period is unprecedented. A spokesperson for the Executive Office for Immigration Review declined to comment on the terminations.

At least two of the New York City immigration judges who were fired, David Kim and Carmen Maria Rey Caldas, told Gothamist they have appealed their terminations with the Merit Systems Protection Board, an independent federal agency.

The firings come amid a massive backlog in immigration court cases. There were nearly 3.8 million pending immigration court cases as of the end of July. Earlier this month, EOIR announced that it reduced the pending immigration court caseload by over 447,000 cases. In recent weeks, the Trump administration has also moved forward with a plan to use military lawyers as temporary immigration judges.

“The dismissal of more immigration judges is an illogical and costly setback for the nation’s immigration courts,” the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers’ President Matt Biggs said in a statement. The National Association of Immigration Judges is an affiliate of the federation.

“At a time when the backlog has reached historic levels and the administration has made immigration enforcement a central issue, the removal of experienced judges is hypocritical, undermines the law, wastes taxpayer dollars, and further delays justice for citizens and immigrants alike,” Biggs said.

Both Rey Caldas and Kim said they received their termination notices while they were hearing cases in their courtrooms. And both were fired after they completed their two-year probation period.

deportation — granting 96% of such petitions from immigrants between 2019 and 2024, according to federal [data](#) published by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

Kim, an immigrant from South Korea, said being an immigration judge was “not just a job, but a calling,” as he strived to adjudicate cases fairly. He added that the mass firings will “significantly worsen an already really bad backlog.”

“I’m not sure, with the way immigration court is heading, due process will be provided to many people appearing before immigration judges,” Kim said.

Rey Caldas, an immigrant from Spain, said she was fired in late August. She said she had never received complaints of bias or unfairness.

Rey Caldas was previously targeted by Republican congressmembers for tweets and statements critical of ICE enforcement during Trump's crackdown on immigration during his first term. In 2022, 30 Republican congressmembers wrote a [letter](#) to then-President Joe Biden, calling for Rey Caldas' removal as a judge.

Rey Caldas said many judges she knows are anxious about the possibility of being fired, with some seeking therapy for the first time due to the recent added stress.

“None of this seems designed to actually address the backlog,” Rey Caldas said, later adding: “This would never fly in a private business.”

Kim and Rey Caldas both described the transformation of their immigration courts in recent months, as more ICE officers arrested immigrants leaving their hearings.

The ICE officers’ presence created a “stressful environment for everyone in the courtroom, including the judges,” Kim said. “So that made the judge’s job much more difficult.”

“It created this unnecessary tension in the courtroom,” Rey Caldas said. “It’s a lot of pressure on a system that wasn’t designed to bear this type of pressure.”

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**cs** **Carl Ian Schwartz**

27 September, 2025

Due process gets replaced by "night and fog." (Look that term up, as we careen towards the authoritarianism we thought we beat in 1945.)

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**Dan Rossell**

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You have a backlog so you reduce the number of qualified adjudicants and propose using people who are unfamiliar with immigration law to replace them? Sounds like a well thought plan to address the situation.

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They created the problem, so they could "solve" it with their racist, fascist policies.

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**The Woodpecker!**

26 September, 2025

trump: slowing down deportations.

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**Lord Terance**

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Rey Caldas, if you're so "stressed", why are you appealing your firing? You obviously aren't cut out for the job. Go put on a paper crown and flip burgers at BK.

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**Lord Terance**

27 September, 2025

These were activist judges that NEEDED to be removed. The military officers would do a better job. 96% approval? Everyone knows most of these asylum cases are fraudulent. It's better than fewer judges than more clown judges like Kim that are flouting our immigration laws.

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**Pazu ❤️ Thelma**

26 September, 2025



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