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NEWS | Dec 22, 2025 at 4:05 pm

Zahid Chaudhry Released from ICE Detention

'The Rule of Law Did Its Job,' Says His Wife

MICAH YIP



Zahid will be released in the next 24 hours. COURTESY MELISSA CHAUDHRY

Muhammad Zahid Chaudhry, a Pakistan-born US army veteran and husband of a former Washington congressional candidate, has been released from ICE detention.

After more than three months in the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Chaudhry was ordered by US District Court Judge David G. Estudillo to be freed in a habeas hearing today, according to Melissa Chaudhry, his wife and former Washington congressional candidate.

Melissa Chaudhry told *The Stranger* her husband was released this afternoon around 3 p.m. The government's attorney, Melissa says, didn't try to defend their position, admitted "point blank" that her husband's detention was a mistake, and apologized directly to Zahid.

The judge told the court his detention was "flat out wrong. I will remember those three words," says Zahid in an interview from a car. "They can make errors and innocent people—I mean, if it can happen to a decorated us veteran like me, who's safe?"

"They know they did wrong," Melissa says.

The US Attorney's Office, Western District of Washington, writes in an email to *the Stranger* that it did not agree that Chaudhry "was wrongfully detained."

“She conceded that the statutory basis for his detention was different than the statute we had cited in our pleadings to the Court. She was apologizing for citing to the incorrect statute. While she acknowledged that courts in our district have been requiring pre-detention procedures in situations similar to what occurred with Mr. Chaudry [sic], she explained that DHS disagrees with these decisions and believes the detention was lawful and authorized under the relevant legal authorities,” writes Communications Director Emily Langlie.



Zahid was [taken into custody](#) during a citizenship interview on August 21 at the United States Citizen and Immigration Services Office in Tukwila. He has lived in the US for 25 years, came to this country legally and served in the US military, but has long faced the threat of deportation, as the government accused him of lying on visa documents by omitting a criminal conviction he received in Australia in 1996 for trying to open a bank

account using someone's passport. Zahid Chaudhry has said that he didn't remember misrepresenting his citizenship.

Since his detention, he's been separated from his wife and two young children, losing his vision due to thyroid eye disease that wasn't being treated in the ICE center. On November 20, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals transferred a pending [emergency motion for release](#) to the Western District Court of Washington, which was immediately accepted, and led to his freedom.

Melissa Chaudhry says her husband will be free while his case continues in the Ninth Circuit. They anticipate a final ruling in about a month, which will determine whether or not he is naturalized.

"[We're feeling] relieved. Vindicated. Grateful," says Melissa Chaudhry. "The rule of law did its job."

This story has been updated.

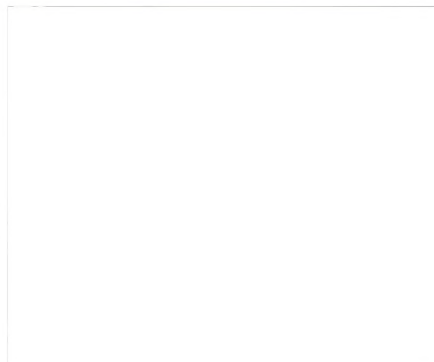
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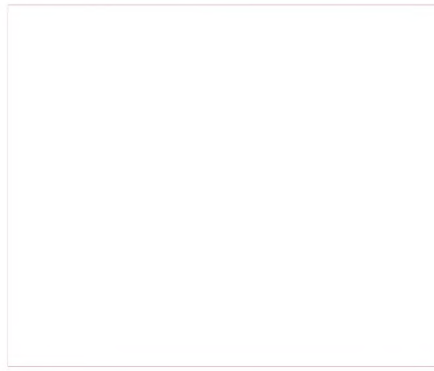


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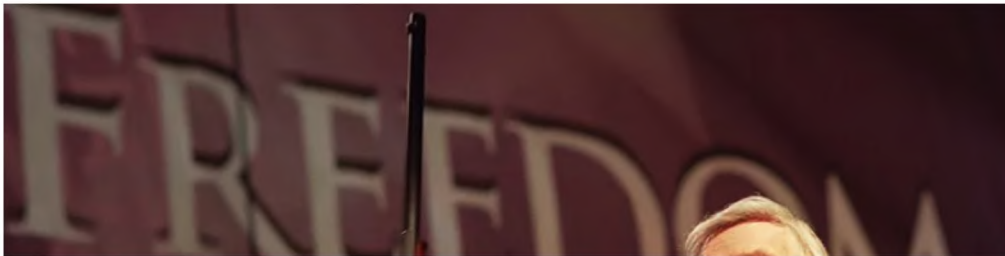
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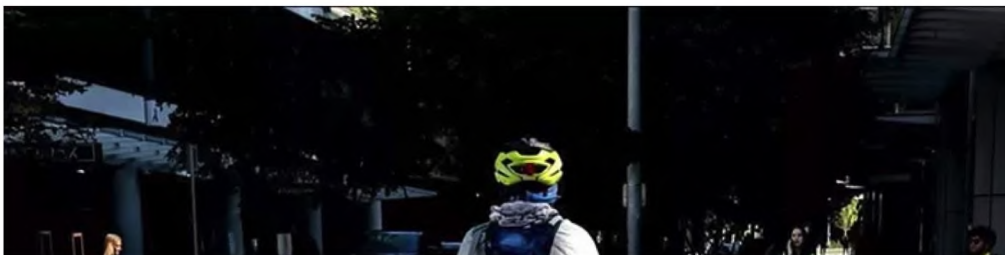
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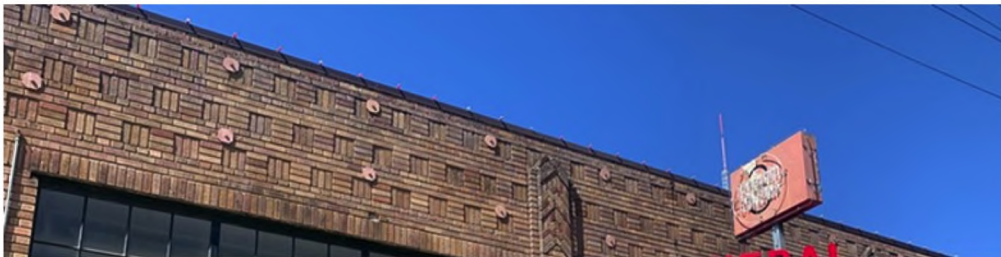
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