

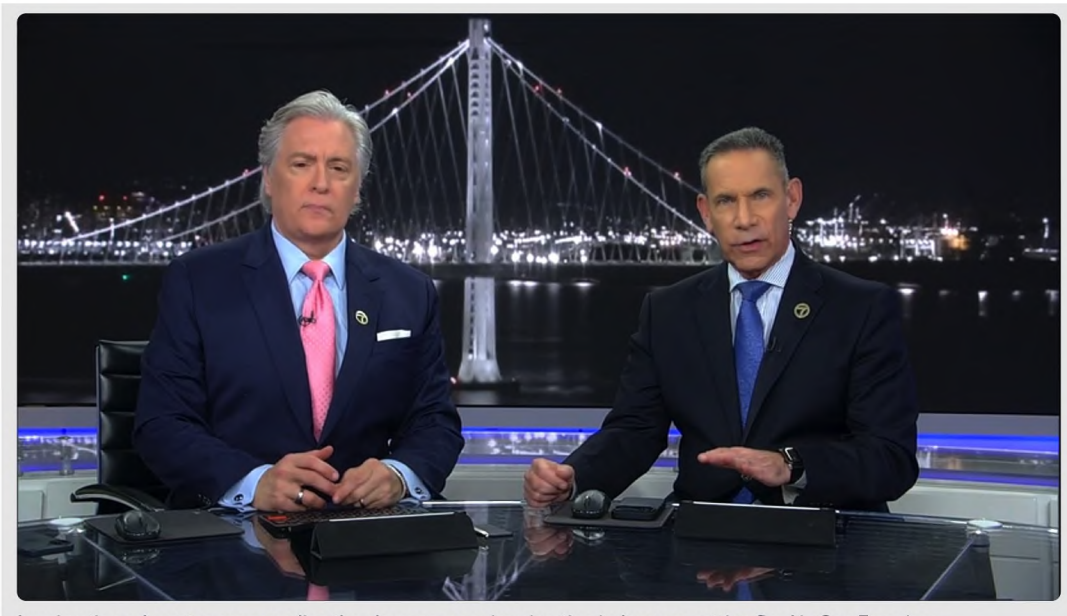
IMMIGRATION

21 immigration judges fired in San Francisco, many reportedly without explanation



By [Luz Pena](#)

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Immigration advocates are sounding the alarm as more immigration judges are getting fired in San Francisco.

SAN FRANCISCO (KGO) -- Immigration advocates are sounding the alarm as more immigration judges are getting fired in San Francisco.

ABC News reports more than 100 immigration judges have been fired this year nationwide with many in the Bay Area - something that is set to impact the immigration backlog from months to multiple years.

At least 21 immigration judges serving the San Francisco Bay Area have been fired. Sources tell us many were without reason or explanation.

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"I was disappointed in the decision to dismantle the courts in such a way. I had several cases to hear, I had a purpose and job, and I understood the seriousness of my position," said Jeremiah Johnson, former immigration judge. "I was fired with no stated cause, no reason, a simple email indicating that I was no longer to be an immigration judge."

Jeremiah Johnson served as an immigration judge for eight years. On Nov. 21, the week before Thanksgiving, he says he was one of five judges fired on the same day.

"Why do you think you were fired?" ABC7 News reporter Luz Pena asked.

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"For doing my job. Immigration judges precede over removal proceedings, that is what the law states if you remove a judge. Not just myself but over 100 judges have been fired so far, forced out, then you are avoiding what the law," said Johnson.

Johnson is part of a group of judges who are challenging the federal government's actions.

"Immigration judges are employees of the Department of Justice. We are appointed by the attorney general. Part of the law indicates that as an immigration judge, we should use our independent decision making, authority and discretion as independent immigration judges. So, we are protected. We should be protected from firing, from termination," said Johnson.

Professor of Law and Migration Studies at the University of San Francisco Bill Hing believes this is a strategy by the Trump administration.

"One theory is that the Trump administration just wants to arrest people, put them in detention and force them to give up on their hearings and the more delay in the court system, the more change it would be that people would be vulnerable to being immigration victims at the immigration courthouse," said Professor Hing.

In a statement, the Department of Justice replied in part: *"After four years of the Biden Administration forcing Immigration Courts to implement a de facto amnesty for hundreds of thousands of aliens, this Department of Justice is restoring integrity to our immigration system."*

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With approximately four immigration judges left in San Francisco, Professor Hing is concerned San Francisco's backlog will worsen at a time.

"I'm concerned that the people's cases are going to be pushed back years," said Professor Hing.

Johnson said his heart is at peace knowing he followed the law and plays back the last words he said to the family of four that presented their asylum case in his courtroom.

"Welcome to the United States," said Johnson.

Johnson is urging Congress to challenge the Attorney General who is the head of the immigration court system about the terminations and explain the plan to give undocumented immigrants an opportunity to have their cases heard in court.



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