

DEMOCRACY2025

The Raid on Rep. Ilhan Omar's Home and Denaturalization Threats: What the Pro-Democracy Community Needs to Know

Recent [public reporting](#) indicates the Trump-Vance administration may be attempting to build a case to strip Rep. Ilhan Omar of her U.S. citizenship. Rep. Omar was born in Somalia, legally immigrated as a child, and later became a naturalized citizen. This explainer lays out what we know about this weaponized investigation into a political opponent of the president, and how it may or may not be relevant to other naturalized American citizens.

What Has Happened

In the early hours of Monday, October 12, federal immigration officials with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) reportedly searched Rep. Ilhan Omar's Washington, D.C. home. They allegedly [seized](#) cell phones, notebooks, computers, and the representative's passport. The agents also allegedly [prevented her](#) from contacting her attorneys for over an hour and did not comply with the safeguards contained in the warrant, which required that the U.S. House of Representative's Office of General Counsel be notified in advance so Rep. Omar could confer with attorneys on any legislative material that cannot be legally seized by federal law enforcement. The timing of the investigation is particularly concerning given that it occurred three weeks before Election Day. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) historically follows the [principle of refraining](#) from undertaking public actions that have the possibility of swaying elections for 60 to 90 days leading up to the election. Rep. Omar, like all members of the House of Representatives, is up for reelection.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the DOJ have not announced the purpose of the investigation that led to the raid on Rep. Omar's home, nor have they filed any criminal or civil charges against Rep. Omar. Meanwhile, the Trump-appointed U.S. Attorney for Washington D.C., Jeanine Pirro, [announced](#) last week that the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia is separately investigating the representative's financial disclosures, despite the fact that the nonpartisan Office of Congressional Conduct recently [cleared Rep. Omar](#) of any wrongdoing and recommended that the House Ethics Committee dismiss the allegations against her. In 2019, the Trump-Pence administration also [reportedly](#) thoroughly investigated her for any irregularities in her immigration process and found no evidence of any wrongdoing or material misrepresentations.

Is There a Denaturalization Case?

Denaturalization is the revocation of U.S. citizenship from a naturalized citizen, meaning someone who was not born a U.S. citizen and later successfully applied to become one. It is extremely rare and requires meeting a high legal bar of demonstrating specific legal violations before a federal judge, whether through a civil or criminal process. For a more comprehensive explanation, see our [primer on denaturalization](#) and our [Civil Denaturalization Hub](#).

Rep. Omar has long been the subject of baseless far-right conspiracy theories, including that she [married](#) a member of her biological family in 2009 to help him obtain U.S. citizenship, and that her [father](#), through whom she obtained U.S. citizenship as a minor child, made misrepresentations on his immigration applications.

There is no evidence for either theory, and both have been widely debunked (including by the Trump-Pence administration after a 2019 investigation into her father's immigration process). Moreover, even if there were evidence supporting the first theory, it would be a stretch to extend existing civil or criminal denaturalization legal frameworks to this scenario. On the criminal side, the five-year statute of limitations has long [run out](#) for conduct in 2009, so she could not be charged, convicted, and then have her citizenship revoked pursuant to that criminal conviction. The administration would need to assert that conduct within the last five years extends that period. On the civil side, there is no basis for a civil denaturalization proceeding: she was a citizen when she was married, and therefore any legal violation regarding her marriage could not be the basis for a civil denaturalization proceeding against her. On the second theory, there is no legal precedent or viable path to revoke the citizenship of a minor who obtained citizenship through their parent's application without also revoking that parent's citizenship. Because Rep. Omar's father passed away in 2020, it is not clear how the government could revoke citizenship from a deceased person, and then go after Rep. Omar. Any such approach of pursuing a civil denaturalization case against Rep. Omar on the basis that she was never eligible for the citizenship she obtained would constitute a dramatic departure from existing precedent.

Given that Rep. Omar's naturalization process was as a minor child who automatically became naturalized when her father became a citizen, the statutory civil denaturalization process might not be applicable to her at all. *The Washington Post* [reported](#) that the government may instead try to cancel Rep. Omar's certificate of citizenship if it cannot bring a denaturalization case against her. This is a rarely-used [administrative process](#) to cancel the certificate of citizenship proving someone has U.S. citizenship (but not the citizenship itself) if the government [determines](#) that the certificate was illegally or fraudulently obtained or created through illegality or by fraud. [According to](#) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Cancellation only affects the document, not the person's underlying status," meaning that Rep. Omar would still be a U.S. citizen even if the government cancelled her certificate. Any attempt to use this obscure process to cancel Rep. Omar's certificate of citizenship would almost certainly lead to lengthy court challenges.

What Naturalized Citizens Need to Know

The actions taken against Rep. Omar represent a weaponized investigation into a perceived enemy of the Trump-Vance administration. They exemplify vitriol the administration has long spread against [Muslims](#), [refugees](#), [Somalis](#), and the state of [Minnesota](#). This is a deeply concerning escalation of authoritarian tactics by the Trump-Vance administration, and as former President Barack Obama [noted on X](#) in reference to the raid on Rep. Omar's home, "if this becomes the new normal, there's no reason to believe it will stop with her."

At the same time, there is no suggestion right now that this raises the risk of denaturalization for the [approximately 26 million](#) naturalized citizens in this country. The raid of Rep. Omar's home by ICE HSI officials is not a typical part of denaturalization cases, and as far as we are aware from public reporting, has not happened in any other denaturalization cases. As with [any denaturalization proceeding](#), even if the government manages to file a civil denaturalization case against Rep. Omar, she will have the opportunity to defend herself in federal court.

Although the Trump-Vance administration has filed more denaturalization cases than other presidents in recent history, cases remain quite rare. Millions of Americans are naturalized citizens, but only [approximately 200](#) people have had civil denaturalization cases filed against them in court under the Trump-Vance administration. Anyone who has particular concerns should consult with an experienced immigration attorney.

Democracy Forward is working with partners to ensure the public knows the facts of the current denaturalization push by the federal government and that the pro-democracy community has the resources it needs to respond. We have built a database of [civil denaturalization cases](#) to track and understand the scope of the administration's efforts, and have compiled resources for citizens and lawyers representing defendants in denaturalization cases in our [Civil Denaturalization Hub](#). We also encourage anyone facing denaturalization charges or lawyers interested in representing denaturalization defendants to contact the [Denaturalization Defense Clearinghouse](#).

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