

# United States Senate

May 25, 2018

The Honorable Kristjen M. Nielsen  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, Prince Gbohoutou, regarding his status with ICE. This situation is extremely time-sensitive.

This morning I tried to reach the Director of ICE, Thomas Homan, but was informed that he was out-of-town and unavailable. At 3:00 p.m. today I spoke with the Assistant Director of Congressional Relations, Raymond Kovacic, and I gave him some of the information outlined below. Mr. Kovacic informed me that this matter would be reviewed immediately and that he will keep me informed about the situation.

Mr. Gbohoutou was reportedly taken into ICE custody on April 19, 2018. Since then, my staff has met with his U.S. citizen wife, Shaniece, and received inquiries regarding Mr. Gbohoutou's detention with ICE from numerous advocacy groups, constituents, and concerned members of the community. I understand that although a Final Order of Removal has been issued for Mr. Gbohoutou and that deportation efforts are underway, there is legal recourse available to him that has not yet been reviewed by the agency.

As the facts below demonstrate, this case is a prime example of some of the totally misdirected efforts of DHS and ICE. In 2006, Mr. Gbohoutou was brought into the U.S. legally as a minor from Central African Republic by his father, a diplomat for the Central African Republic. Violence in his home county escalated (Central African Bush War) and his father applied for asylum with Mr. Gbohoutou as a derivative beneficiary on his petition. Mr. Gbohoutou's father's asylum application was denied in 2011 and unsuccessfully appealed in 2012. Mr. Gbohoutou's family was then ordered removed from the U.S. Mr. Gbohoutou was a minor throughout this time and, consequently, was not able to file for an adjustment of status himself. His mother was brutally murdered shortly after in the Central African Republic. Soon after, his father passed away as well.

Mr. Gbohoutou has been a member of his community in Maryland nearly his whole life. He attended High Point High School in Prince George's County, Maryland and graduated in 2011. He married his high school sweetheart, Shaniece (Hodges) Gbohoutou. Shaniece filed an

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immigration petition for Mr. Gbohoutou in 2017 that is pending with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Despite Mr. Gbohoutou's having a pending immigration petition, ICE has been monitoring his presence for several years because of the earlier final order of removal. I understand that ICE recently obtained a travel document for Mr. Gbohoutou's removal and took him into custody, detained him, and is now in the process of deporting him.

Other than minor traffic violations, Mr. Gbohoutou has no criminal offenses. He has not been the beneficiary of any public assistance and is legally married to Shaniece Gbohoutou. I have been advised that his attorney, Adam Crandall, Esq., has filed a Motion to Reopen to apply for adjustment of status so that Mr. Gbohoutou may continue to pursue his efforts to obtain legal immigrant status in the U.S. Further, I was advised that a Supplement to the Request has been filed based in part on changed country conditions in CAR that permit Mr. Gbohoutou to pursue a new claim for asylum in the United States. Specifically, as a Christian, he is at risk of being targeted by the violent Muslim Séléka armed group. Moreover, Mr. Gbohoutou's parents, both of whom shared his last name, were tortured and killed by the Bozizé regime, and the current leader of the CAR is a former prime minister of that regime. As a result, Mr. Gbohoutou possesses a well-founded fear of returning to CAR at this time.

Significantly, the U.S. Department of State recently ordered the departure from the Central African Republic of all non-emergency U.S. government officials and raised its travel advisory to "Level 4: Do Not Travel." If removed, Mr. Gbohoutou will be forced into circumstances that endanger his life. Moreover, his wife would be unable to relocate to – or even travel to – be with her husband.

Mr. Gbohoutou is a member of our community and wishes to return to his home in New Carrollton, Maryland with his wife. Mrs. Gbohoutou, Mr. Gbohoutou's legal counsel, and hundreds of constituents from the State of Maryland request your consideration of Mr. Gbohoutou's request for release from ICE custody into ICE Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP) and the approval of his Motion to Reopen to Apply for Adjustment of Status.

I would appreciate your reviewing this urgent matter as expeditiously as possible.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen  
U.S. Senator

cc: Thomas Homan,  
Deputy Director and Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director, ICE

Raymond Kovacic,  
Assistant Director of Congressional Relations, ICE