

## Trump immigration crackdown enters the Twilight Zone

Kafkaesque. One hears that word a lot in discussions of Kilmar Abrego Garcia.

Or, for lowbrows like me, “The Twilight Zone” might be the pertinent reference.

Abrego Garcia is the Maryland man who was wrongly deported and imprisoned without trial in a grim prison in El Salvador. In March, agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) stopped Abrego Garcia while he was driving with his young son. Within days, he was on a plane to a notorious terrorist confinement center called CECOT in El Salvador, where it is clear that U.S. officials were content to leave him to an uncertain fate.

His wife sued the United States over the deportation in a case that went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The process revealed a sordid reality in the administration of President Donald Trump that brings to mind the scene in Lewis Carroll’s children’s tale “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” when the Queen of Hearts impatiently declares during the trial of the Knave of Hearts: “Sentence first — verdict afterwards.”

In essence, that’s the shaky case against Abrego Garcia. The Trump administration no longer disputes that he was mistakenly deported. And, indeed, the Supreme Court ruled that the government must obey a lower court’s direction to “facilitate” the prisoner’s release and return to the United States.

However, Trump, who shows little patience for anyone or anything that gets in the way of his agenda, curiously deferred to Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, who has rebuffed calls for Abrego Garcia to be returned to U.S. custody.

And Trump and his minions continue to accuse Abrego Garcia, without credible evidence, of being a member of the notorious international gang MS-13, whereas in fact he had escaped to the U.S., and was granted “withholding of removal” status in 2019, on the strength of his testimony that the gang had threatened his family in his native El Salvador.

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat said on Thursday night that he had met in an unexpected meeting at a hotel in San Salvador with Abrego Garcia, hours after he had been denied a meeting. But Bukele insisted that Abrego Garcia would remain in El Salvador.

For Democrats like Van Hollen, the issue has been a defense of fundamental principles of human rights, legal access and equal protection under the Constitution.

For Republicans like team Trump, equal rights for Abrego Garcia is a misguided gesture of sympathy for a man who, as the White House notes repeatedly, entered the U.S. illegally.

“It’s appalling and sad that Sen. Van Hollen and the Democrats applauding his trip to El Salvador today are incapable of having any shred of common sense or empathy for their own constituents,” Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said at a Wednesday afternoon briefing, displaying her rather typical role as a gruff, judgmental megaphone for the

president’s views and prejudgments.

Due process, all the formalities that ensure individuals are treated equally under the law, has been called the fundamental right on which all other rights are grounded. It guarantees that individuals have a fair opportunity to be heard before their life, liberty or

property is taken away.

Indeed, as an American who happens to live near the strip mall in the Maryland suburb where Abrego Garcia was arrested, I find it “appalling and sad” that the administration shows so little respect for the constitutional right to due process.

It is, after all, one of the bulwarks against the rise of Big Brother autocracy that Trump seems to find increasingly appealing.

The Trump administration has admitted to an “administrative error” in Abrego Garcia’s case, yet it also says they do not have the authority to secure his return.

Instead, as Abrego Garcia’s lawyers have said, he “sits in a foreign prison solely at the behest of the United States, as the product of a Kafkaesque mistake.”

There’s old Kafka again. And I’m not alone in noting the similarity.

Interestingly, a deeper look into the case against Abrego Garcia reveals some loose ends. One arresting officer, for example, linked his Chicago Bulls baseball cap to the MS-13 gang, which sounds pretty thin.

A federal appeals court on Thursday scolded the Trump administration for its handling of the case.

“It is difficult in some cases to get to the very heart of the matter. But in this case, it is not hard at all,” wrote Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III, in an opinion this past week for a panel of the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals. “The government is asserting a right to stash away residents of this country in foreign prisons without the semblance of due process that is the foundation of our constitutional order.”

Wilkinson’s no bleeding heart liberal. The Reagan appointee, as Politico pointed out “has been on the bench for 41 years and is one of the nation’s most prominent conservative appellate judges.”

Earlier in the week, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg found probable cause to hold administration officials in criminal contempt for defying an order to halt deportations of people deemed “alien enemies.”

And U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis, who has described the deportation of Abrego Garcia as “wholly lawless,” castigated administration officials for having done “nothing” to comply with her order to facilitate his release and return.

Well, not quite nothing. They have helped start a debate over the legal meaning of “facilitate.” I imagine Kafka would have some thoughts on the semantics. Meanwhile, I’m wondering if Team Trump knows the legal meaning of “freedom.”



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## Take out Iran’s nuclear facilities now

Before basketball’s 24-second rule, there was a tactic called freezing the ball.

The team that was ahead would attempt to run out the clock by holding onto the ball as long as it could to deny the opposing team an opportunity to score.

That looks like what Iran is again doing — “freezing” negotiations while finishing the final stages of nuclear enrichment on the way to building a deliverable nuclear weapon.

It is important for the U.S. to take Iranian leaders at their word. Failing to do so and believing the regime will pull back on what some of their leaders have said is a religious mandate to wipe out Israel and “the great Satan” virtually guarantees the world will be faced with the greatest threat since the beginning of the Cold War with a nuclear-armed Soviet Union. Except the Soviets were atheists. The Iranian mullahs think doing what they claim to be Allah’s will, especially if it leads to martyrdom, guarantees them a ticket to Heaven.

The West has a history of not taking seriously the announced intentions of its enemies. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publicly stated their economic and political goals, which were fulfilled in the Bolshevik

Revolution and the imposition of communism and socialism in Russia.

Adolf Hitler wrote “Mein Kampf” (My Struggle) in which he stated his hatred of Jews, a hatred incorporated in the Third Reich, which led to the Holocaust.

In each instance there were Western academics, journalists, even clergy, who excused, denied or rationalized these objectives. And in each instance millions of lives were lost in a forced famine and gulags (Stalin) and World War II (launched by Hitler).

Past deals with Iran, including initially agreed inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN, have been violated. Why does anyone believe the Iranians will abide by a new agreement?

Writing for the publication JNS.org, New York attorney Eric Levine references an April 14 op-ed in The Wall Street Journal by former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in which Kerry “discusses what a good deal between the United States and Iran will look like if Iran is willing to reach an agreement with President Donald Trump. Kerry’s hypothetical new Iran deal bears no resemblance to the disaster that he and then-President Barack Obama

forced down the throats of Americans in 2015, despite overwhelming bipartisan opposition.”

Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, has no experience dealing with people who claim a religious motivation for their actions. He is no more likely to succeed with Iran than Kerry and Obama who got rolled by the mullahs.

As John Bolton, President Trump’s former national security adviser, has written for the publication Independent Arabia: “Washington has every justification to take military action against Tehran’s proliferation efforts. Iran’s nuclear threat is not a problem merely for Israel, but for the entire world. For thirty years, the ayatollahs have sought to become a nuclear power, to the detriment of everyone else. America has the wherewithal to eliminate this proliferation threat, and would be politically and morally justified in doing so. Helping Israel de-fang Iran follows quite logically.”

Iran is in a weak position, domestically and internationally. Regime change would be the best option, but the rulers are unlikely to willingly relinquish power. The time to strike Iranian nuclear facilities is now. Delay means we will likely have to face a nuclear armed Iran with the ability to launch ICBMs at Israel and American cities. Who thinks that is a risk worth taking?



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## What we must do now to take action against restricted rights

If the Trump regime can dictate what the universities of America teach or research or publish, or what students can learn or say, no university is safe.

Not even the truth is safe.

If the Trump regime can revoke student visas because students exercise their freedom of speech on a university campus, freedom of speech is not secure for any of us.

If the Trump regime can abduct a permanent resident of the United

States and send him to a torture prison in El Salvador, without any criminal charges, no American is safe.

What do we do about this?

We stand up to it. We resist it. We denounce it. We boldly and fearlessly reject it — regardless of the cost, regardless of the threats.

As columnist David Brooks wrote in a recent column (I’m hardly in the habit of quoting David Brooks):

“It’s time for a comprehensive national

civic uprising. It’s time for Americans in universities, law, business, nonprofits and the scientific community, and civil servants and beyond to form one coordinated mass movement. Trump is about power. The only way he’s going to be stopped is if he’s confronted by some movement that possesses rival power.”

But what does a national civic uprising look like?

It may look like a general strike — a strike in which tens of millions of Americans refuse to work, refuse to buy, refuse to engage in anything other than a mass demonstration against

the regime.

And not just one general strike, but a repeating general strike — a strike whose numbers continue to grow and whose outrage, resistance, and solidarity continue to spread across the land.

I urge all of you to start preparing now for such a series of general strikes. I will inform you of what I learn about who is doing what. (One possible place to begin is generalstrikeus.com.)

My friends, what the Trump regime has unleashed on America is intolerable. It is time — beyond time — for a national civic uprising. We must take action.



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### IN MY VIEW GUIDELINES

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If you would like to write an In My View column, call Don Wilkins at 270-691-7299 to talk over your idea.