

United States Senate  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

I continue to be concerned over the ongoing situation of third country nationals sent by the Trump Administration to Panama and Costa Rica in February. Five months later, dozens of people remain in vulnerable situations in these two countries with no clarity on what happens to them next. In addition to details about our agreements with these countries, I am requesting information about what steps the Administration has or is taking to ensure that these individuals are not trafficked for sexual or labor exploitation, rendered stateless or sent to a country where they will be subjected to torture or other harm.

In February 2025, the Administration removed nearly 500 migrants in the United States—many seeking asylum—to Panama and Costa Rica. These migrants were from Afghanistan, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan and Yemen, among other countries. These individuals included Iranian Christians fleeing religious persecution, Afghan women escaping the Taliban's ruthless crackdown and Russians facing political persecution for protesting Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While some chose to return to their countries of origin, dozens of deported migrants are still in Panama and Costa Rica with no clear path forward.

In Panama, authorities have moved migrants several times—from a hotel in Panama City to an immigration reception center in the Darien province then back to Panama City. Human rights groups report that migrants who cannot return to their country of origin due to fear of persecution or death are now living in shelters in or near the city with limited support from charitable groups. This includes several young Afghan women who are without their families. Their legal status and future are uncertain; some who have sought asylum have already been denied. With limited money, little to no Spanish, and unclear legal status, many of these migrants, particularly women and children, are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

In Costa Rica, deported migrants—including nearly 100 children—have faced similar challenges. In June, Costa Rica's Constitutional Court ordered the government to release migrants deported by the Trump Administration who had been held in a temporary shelter since February saying the government had violated migrants' rights by not providing access to legal counsel or sufficient information about their immigration status. For those still in the country and unable to return home, their future remains uncertain.

Further, Congress has yet to receive the specific agreements or arrangements under which these individuals were sent to Panama and Costa Rica. Pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act (1 U.S.C. § 112b), as amended by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (P.L. 117-263), the State Department must provide to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee agreements or non-binding instruments that are the “subject of a written communication from the Chair or Ranking Member” of either Committee. This letter constitutes the statutorily required written communication. As such, please provide the text of any agreement, implementing agreements, arrangements for international agreements or non-binding instruments made with Panama and Costa Rica since January 20, 2025, related to acceptance of individuals from the United States.

In addition, I also request that you promptly respond to the following questions:

1. Prior to, during or following their removal from the United States, has the U.S. government provided any form of assistance to these individuals, or to the governments of Panama or Costa Rica, to support these individuals?
2. What protections were put in place to prevent particularly vulnerable individuals—such as women and children—from being exploited by transnational criminal organizations, smugglers or traffickers?

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jeanne Shaheen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeanne" and last name "Shaheen" clearly distinguishable.

Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member