

Eindhoven, The Netherlands / 19.01.2026



Help Me Leave Calls On the International Community to Reassess the U.S.' "Safe Country" Designation Due to Escalating Violence

Foreign Violence

On January 3rd of 2026, the United States launched a military operation on the capital of Venezuela, culminating in the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife.¹ The couple have been flown to the United States and indicted on narco-terrorism charges. Donald Trump has stated that the United States would be “running things” in Venezuela until other arrangements can be made and has also begun attempting to sell the crude oil from Venezuela on the international market. These actions were taken without Congressional approval² and in violation of international law³, marking a drastic escalation of violence and force against other sovereign nations. These actions have significant implications for international relations and the security of foreign countries, as Trump threatens similar actions against Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Iran, and Greenland.⁴

Violence in the U.S.

On January 7th of 2026, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent Jonathan Ross fired three shots at Renee Good, killing her in her vehicle as she attempted to drive away.⁵ The Trump administration quickly labeled Renee a “domestic terrorist”⁶ and claimed she was attempting to strike ICE agents with her vehicle, despite multiple sources of video footage contradicting this narrative. Vice President JD Vance has stated that Ross will be given full immunity for the murder of Renee Good, reinforcing the narrative that the violence and rights violations being committed by federal agents are acceptable⁷ The absence of accountability was amplified by Homeland Security Advisor Steven Miller publicly telling ICE agents, “*You have federal immunity in the conduct of your duties. Anybody who lays a hand on you or tries to stop you or tries to obstruct you is committing a felony. You have immunity to perform your duties, and no one – no city official, no state official, no illegal alien, no leftist agitator or domestic insurrectionist – can prevent you from fulfilling your legal obligations and duties. The Department of Justice has made clear that if officials cross that line into obstruction, into criminal conspiracy against the United States or against ICE officers, then they will face justice*” (Stephen Miller, The Will Cain show, 2025).⁸ Simultaneously, the FBI has entirely taken over the investigation into Renee Good’s murder, limiting the possibility of state or local government officials enforcing the law.⁹

These actions are part of a trend of violent lawlessness by the federal government, resulting in the death of at least 32 people by ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) last year, not including the four shooting fatalities and some alleged cases of death due to medical neglect while detained.¹⁰ That includes the murder of Keith Porter by an ICE agent in Los Angeles on New Year’s Eve.¹¹ This state violence is poised to continue increasing, as already evidenced by emerging reports of additional shootings by ICE and Donald Trump’s threat to deploy military troops to Minnesota to support ICE agent action and suppress protests.¹²

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Is the U.S. a Safe Country?

The Trump administration's escalating aggression and comfort with the use of violence suggest that the U.S. no longer meets the criteria to be considered a "safe third country" or "safe country of origin" as defined by the European Union.¹³ Government agents murdering people without oversight poses a "real risk of serious harm" and is a disproportionate punishment. The fact that these extrajudicial murders are seemingly happening to people based on their engagement in political dissent, their perceived ethnicity, or other shared characteristics, suggests that these actions constitute persecution. The federal government's refusal to hold federal agents accountable for these murders, and their insistence that lower governments cannot stop agents from completing their "duty," seems to be a violation of the laws that could offer effective remedies against violations of fundamental rights and freedoms. Additionally, genocide experts have identified early signs of a genocide of transgender people in the U.S., such as the declaration of "transgender/ radical gender ideology" as "violent extremist" terrorism and the legislative attacks on the basic human rights of the Transgender, Gender-Expansive, and Intersex (TGEI) community. Together, and with other items of concern, these escalating aggressions should incite investigation as to the legitimacy of the United States as a "safe country."¹⁴

International Action Can Save Lives

These diverse acts of violence, authoritarianism, and imperialism by the U.S. government show the Trump administration's disregard for human rights and international law, and the lack of accountability for criminal behavior by the U.S. government. The U.S.' decline into fascism is a threat to the world, and it will take international partnership to address. Although officially acknowledging the persecution in the United States may feel politically risky, refusing to do so will simply leave persecuted people and potential allies in harm's way, while failing to stop Trump's imperial aspirations in Greenland and beyond. **Help Me Leave** implores the international community to open more safe and legal pathways to safety abroad for persecuted people in the United States, while conducting an investigation to evaluate whether the U.S. meets the criteria to be considered a "safe country." Quick and effective international action can save the lives of people experiencing persecution in the United States.

If You Would Like To Help

Help Me Leave is committed to helping people experiencing or at risk of persecution in the United States find legal and accessible paths to safety abroad. We are expanding our advocacy work to increase access to asylum and other permission-to-stay statuses for people fleeing persecution in the U.S.

If you would like to help and have the skills or knowledge we're looking for, please fill out our volunteer form: <https://forms.clickup.com>

*Additional opportunities for individuals to use their voice in support of this advocacy campaign are being developed.

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About Help Me Leave

Help Me Leave is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit platform helping people find safe pathways out of countries where their rights are under threat. We provide practical visa and relocation information, connect people with legal and community support, and advocate for fairer global migration systems.

For press inquiries or expert comment, visit helpmeleave.us