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LDF Condemns Forced Removal and Detention of U.S. Senator Padilla

[Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement in response to the forced removal and handcuffing of U.S. Senator Alex Padilla at a Department of Homeland Security press conference on June 12, 2025.

“We are outraged by the aggressive and unjustified mistreatment of U.S. Senator Alex Padilla, who was forcibly removed from a federal agency press conference, handcuffed, detained, and subsequently released after clearly identifying himself as a sitting member of Congress. He did not lunge or engage in any threatening behavior — contrary to the disinformation being spread by the Department of Homeland Security. Such mischaracterizations are familiar attempts to distract from the serious threat that the government’s actions pose.

“When members of Congress are attacked and criminalized for fulfilling their constitutional oversight responsibilities, it is not only an assault on them — it is an assault on the millions of voters they represent.

“The silence of too many of Senator Padilla’s colleagues in the Senate is deafening. Every member of Congress who fails to condemn this violation is complicit in the erosion of our democratic norms.

“What happened to Senator Padilla — on camera, in plain view — offers a chilling glimpse into this administration’s escalating abuse of power. As Senator Padilla himself noted, if this is how federal agents treat a sitting senator in broad daylight, imagine what happens to immigrant communities during ICE raids under the cover of night.

“The assault on Senator Padilla, coupled with the recent indictment of Representative LaMonica McIver and arrest of Mayor Ras Baraka in May, reflects a broader calculated effort to quell dissent and silence opposition through force and intimidation, including the deployment of federal troops to suppress peaceful protests. No democracy can survive such outright violations of constitutional rights. We call on Congress to immediately investigate the actions of the Department of Homeland Security, and we urge elected officials — regardless of party — to speak out against these authoritarian tactics.”

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.