

June 18, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20528

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

Dear Secretary Mullin and Secretary Rubio,

I wrote to the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department more than a year ago expressing concerns about your Departments' unhelpful and unbalanced policies with respect to travelers visiting our country for major sporting events. I warned that the Trump administration's attacks on foreign nationals visiting the United States would undermine the economic and reputational success of events that should spotlight the United States as a welcoming country worth visiting. Recent entry denials and visa issues experienced by foreign travelers attending the World Cup make painfully clear that has been the case. I write again to urge your Departments to take corrective steps to ensure a smoother process for the remainder of these soccer games and the upcoming 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic games.

Over the past 17 months, the Trump administration has instituted many policy changes affecting visa issuances for foreign nationals. These policy changes have directly resulted in due process violations, mistreatment, prolonged questioning and detention, lengthy visa interview wait-times, visa revocations, and arbitrary denials of entry for visitors and returning residents of the United States. Over the past year and half, ordinary travel has turned into a traumatizing ordeal for tourists, business travelers, lawfully permanent residents, and U.S. citizens.

Examples abound of that ordeal and its hurtful effects while the United States is currently hosting the 2026 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, which is expected to be the largest sporting event in U.S. history. The United States is hosting 78 of the 104 matches across 11 U.S. host cities. FIFA expected at least 5 million international visitors, and the State Department more recently estimated ten million visitors to the United States. However, early reports from the tourism sector already show signs of lackluster attendance, due to concerns about travel to the United States. The Trump administration has placed a full travel ban on 20 countries, restricting entry for immigrants and nonimmigrants alike, while citizens from other countries ultimately chose not to travel to the United States due to fears of being targeted by U.S. immigration agents.

These fears are not unfounded. Earlier this month, the Trump administration denied entry to a World Cup referee, Omar Artan, from Somalia. He is considered one of Africa's top referees and earned honors as Africa's best male referee in 2025. While the Trump administration claimed it refused him admission due to his alleged association with suspected members of terror organizations, the administration has provided no

evidence of its claim. Artan was placed in a holding cell and questioned for more than 11 hours by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials and ultimately sent away to Istanbul.

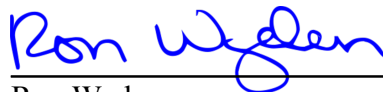
Similarly, Iraqi striker Aymen Hussein was held and questioned for nearly six hours at the airport, with U.S. Customs and Border Protection checking his phone. He was thankfully permitted to enter the country. But the team's national photographer, Talal Salah, was held for more than 10 hours, also subject to checks on his phone, and ultimately denied entry.

Just this week, Cape Verde men's team made its first appearance in the World Cup and Vozinha, the goalkeeper, earned global acclaim for his role helping his underdog team tie powerhouse Spain. But his mother could not be there to see her son make history, reportedly due to a visa issue and related fees.

Other spectators have also experienced hardship in attending games in the United States. Dozens of fans from Scotland shared on social media that their travel authorization was revoked without reason or warning, after they had spent thousands of dollars on flights and accommodations to attend the World Cup. Likewise, reports indicate numerous Moroccan fans were denied visas after spending thousands of dollars to attend the World Cup. No clear reasons were given for the revocation of travel permits or denial of visas.

Such stories needlessly jeopardize the United States' reputation on the world stage, and have a chilling effect on those considering whether they should visit the United States. There will be more travelers coming to the United States in the coming weeks for the World Cup, and many more ahead of the 2028 Olympics and Paralympics. I urge the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State to uphold the rights of travelers, avoid unnecessary denials, detention, and deportation of anyone attending these games, and keep Congress apprised of its efforts to ensure the success of these major sporting events.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator