

## U.S. Deportation Deals with African Nations Under Scrutiny

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The United States has expanded its immigration enforcement policy by forming new deportation agreements with several African nations, drawing scrutiny from legal experts and international observers. The arrangements are part of an effort to deal with foreign nationals whose countries of origin refuse to take them back.

South Sudan, Eswatini, and Rwanda are among the countries that have agreed to accept deportees from the U.S., including individuals who are not their own citizens. These third-country agreements follow a similar deal made earlier this year with El Salvador.

In March 2025, the U.S. paid El Salvador \$5 million to detain over 250 Venezuelans, some with suspected links to gang activity. The individuals were housed in a prison previously noted for its poor conditions. The deal came at a time of improved diplomatic relations, highlighted by a visit from President Nayib Bukele to the White House.

U.S. officials began seeking similar arrangements in Africa after facing challenges returning certain individuals to their home countries. South Sudan and Eswatini, both limited in detention capacity, agreed to accept some deportees under specific terms.

A major turning point came in June, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of allowing third-country deportations without advance notice or access to appeals. Legal scholars noted that the decision marks a departure from longstanding legal protections, raising concerns about the safety of individuals sent to countries with weak legal systems.

In one such case, the U.S. paid Rwanda \$100,000 in April to accept an Iraqi national reportedly suspected of terrorist ties. Previous U.S. State Department reports have cited overcrowding and health concerns within Rwanda's prison system.

Legal questions have also been raised in Eswatini, where advocacy groups claimed that deported individuals were denied legal representation. In July, the Southern Africa Litigation Centre filed an emergency application on behalf of several people transferred under the U.S.-Eswatini arrangement.

Not all countries have agreed to such deals. Nigerian Foreign Minister Yusuf Tuggar stated that Nigeria was approached but declined, citing legal and logistical concerns. "There was considerable pressure," Tuggar said, "but we made our position clear."

Between May and June, the U.S. reportedly pursued deportation arrangements with as many as 58 countries, many located in Africa. Sources familiar with the negotiations said U.S. officials occasionally used discussions of travel restrictions or foreign aid as bargaining tools.

While the administration maintains that these actions are tied to national security, critics argue that they introduce legal and diplomatic challenges, particularly regarding

accountability and long-term foreign policy.

As the U.S. continues to manage growing immigration pressures at home, the global impact of these policies, particularly in Africa, remains to be seen.