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U.S. Man Facing Deportation to Australia Despite No Ties After Four Decades in America

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Reza Zavvar, a 52-year-old man who has lived in the United States since childhood, is facing deportation to either Australia or Romania, countries with which he has no citizenship, residency, or personal ties. Detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) near his Maryland home five weeks ago, Zavvar is currently being held at a privately operated detention facility in Ohio.

Born in Iran, Zavvar immigrated to the U.S. in 1985 at age 12 and has lived, worked, and built his life in America for more than 40 years. Despite his long-term residency, Zavvar never obtained U.S. citizenship, making him vulnerable under current immigration

enforcement policies. Although he once held a green card, it was revoked in 2004 due to two non-violent marijuana-related offences dating back to the 1990s. Despite the convictions, he was granted a non-expulsion order, which legally barred deportation to Iran and allowed him to remain in the country.

Court documents now indicate the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is seeking to deport Zavvar to either Romania or Australia. The rationale behind selecting these countries remains unclear, as Zavvar has never lived in or held legal status in either nation. This approach has prompted concern among immigration experts and foreign governments alike.

In a statement to *9News*, Zavvar's mother, Firouzeh Firouzabadi, described the arrest as devastating. She said her son was taken into custody while walking his dog and that she has not seen him since. Zavvar's sister, Maryam, added in an online petition that he is now "thousands of miles from anything familiar, while bureaucrats decide his future."

The Australian government, when asked for comment, expressed confusion over the case and confirmed it had not been contacted by U.S. authorities. "We consider any application for a visa on its merits. We have not been contacted by the U.S. government about this matter," a government spokesperson said.

Immigration attorney Ava Beach also criticized the move, stating, "Australia doesn't seek to be a place where America deports people to who aren't Americans. How they picked those countries is a mystery to me."

Legal advocates suggest Zavvar's situation may be tied to an expansion of deportation protocols introduced during the Trump administration, which allowed for the removal of non-citizens with criminal records to third-party nations. While these cases typically involve countries with which the U.S. has weaker diplomatic relationships, immigration attorney Mahsa Khanbabai, a board member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, said Australia's inclusion is unusual. "Australia is not a country that we would normally consider to be in such a position," she told *ABC News*.

In defense of the decision, DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin referred to Zavvar as a "criminal illegal alien," citing his previous drug conviction. "ICE continues to try and find a country willing to accept this criminal illegal alien," McLaughlin stated.

According to DHS statistics, approximately 40 percent of individuals currently in ICE custody have criminal records. The department maintains that its current enforcement

actions reflect longstanding efforts to tighten immigration control and uphold existing laws.

Zavvar's legal team and family continue to fight his deportation, launching a petition and fundraising campaign to support his case. Despite his past legal issues, supporters argue his decades-long presence in the U.S., his lack of ties to other countries, and the risk of being sent to a nation where he has no support system make his removal both unreasonable and unjust.

The case highlights broader questions about immigration enforcement, third-country deportations, and the long-term consequences of unresolved legal status, even for those who have spent nearly their entire lives in the United States.