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Los Angeles Musician Detained During Immigration Enforcement Push

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A Tunisian-born classical musician was taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) last July while driving in Pasadena, amid a broader federal initiative targeting immigration violations across Southern California.

Rami Othmane, who has lived in the United States since 2015, was stopped by federal agents while on his way to a local grocery store. His wife, Dr. Wafaa Alrashid, a Utah-born

physician and chief medical officer at Huntington Hospital in Pasadena, rushed to the scene using GPS tracking on her phone. By the time she arrived, he had already been transported away.

Speaking in a recent interview, Alrashid described the moment as “the worst day of my life.”

Othmane entered the U.S. on a tourist visa and overstayed. However, according to Alrashid, a previous deportation order had been dismissed in 2020. The couple legally married in March 2025 and submitted a green card application soon after. Despite that, Othmane was arrested as part of ongoing enforcement operations that have seen hundreds detained throughout the region in recent months.

In a written response, the Department of Homeland Security confirmed that his visa had expired but did not acknowledge the dismissed deportation order or the pending green card petition. ICE rejected claims of mistreatment and stated, “Ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of individuals in our custody is a top priority at ICE.”

Alrashid shared details of Othmane’s initial detention, describing harsh conditions in an ICE facility in downtown Los Angeles. “There were no beds, no pillows, no blankets, no soap, no toothbrush, and the toilet was in plain view,” she said. Despite the situation, Othmane reportedly shared a sweater with another detainee and constructed a privacy screen using trash bags.

Othmane is known locally for his performances of classical Arabic music, frequently appearing at cultural events and restaurants. “He’s brought a lot to the community,” Alrashid noted. “A lot of people love his music.”

Over a week after his arrest, a group of fellow musicians and supporters gathered outside the Los Angeles ICE facility, performing Arabic and Spanish-language music in support. Pablo Alvarado, co-executive director of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, called the musical protest an “act of love and resistance.”

Shortly before the rally, Alrashid became alarmed when she didn’t receive her husband’s usual phone call. That evening, she finally heard from him: he had been transferred to a detention center in Arizona and reported swelling in one of his legs.

A procedural hearing held last Thursday confirmed Othmane’s pending immigration status. A bail bond hearing is scheduled this coming Tuesday, which may determine whether he

can be released while his case moves forward.