

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

September 19, 2024

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, S.W.
Washington D.C. 20528

Dear Attorney General Garland and Secretary Mayorkas:

We are deeply disturbed by recent reports from South Florida that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has refused to pursue federal criminal charges against individuals engaged in a human trafficking operation involving Ecuadorian and Chinese nationals smuggled into the Florida Keys. We write to demand an explanation for this most recent failure to enforce the federal laws intended to keep our country safe and secure.

As you are certainly aware by now, on August 18, 2024, U.S. Border Patrol agents initially detained five individuals caught smuggling Chinese and Ecuadorian nationals aboard a small vessel that landed in Key Largo, Florida.¹ However, despite catching these traffickers and reportedly obtaining clear confessions of their crimes, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida declined to file federal charges against the smugglers, which would have allowed them to walk free without any consequence for their criminal operation. Fortunately, Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay and 16th Judicial Circuit State Attorney Dennis Ward took quick action to detain and prosecute these criminals for violations of state law, avoiding the inexcusable lack of law enforcement resulting from DOJ's failure to fulfill its core responsibilities.

Make no mistake, your refusal to take action securing our national border and federally prosecuting these human traffickers to the fullest extent of the law serves only to encourage future violations of federal immigration law and to perpetuate the modern-day slave trade that is fueled by human trafficking operations.

Secretary Mayorkas, it is your responsibility to secure our national borders. However, time and again we have seen state and local law enforcement forced to expend their limited resources to step up when the Biden-Harris administration and your agency fails or refuses to prevent and prosecute border incursions and human

¹ <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/florida-keys/article291225705.html>

smuggling operations like we witnessed in Key Largo. It seems that Border Czar Kamala Harris need look no further for the “root causes” of the illegal immigration crisis that plagues our country than the incompetent members of her own administration.

Attorney General Garland, it is DOJ’s responsibility to prosecute violations of our immigration laws that are necessary to preserve our national order and security. However, time and again you have shown greater interest in wasting taxpayer resources to target and pursue specious cases against the perceived political opponents of the Biden-Harris administration. Worse yet, your agency has pursued lawsuits against border states to prevent us from taking steps to secure our borders against the repeated incursions by foreign nationals from across the globe.

We respectfully request you provide a detailed explanation as to why the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Florida declined to file federal criminal charges against the human traffickers detained in this case for these clear violations of federal law. Please provide this detailed response within two weeks of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress