

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 27, 2026

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Noem,

We write to demand an immediate investigation into the tragic death of Nurul Amin Shah Alam, a Burmese refugee who was found deceased in the City of Buffalo on Tuesday, February 24th, 2026, after being transported and subsequently neglected by U.S. Border Patrol (USBP). As Members of Congress with the responsibility to conduct oversight of this administration's Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its inhumane – at times deadly – treatment of immigrants, we must hold this administration accountable for any negligence, wrongdoing, or breach of protocol that resulted in a death. Accordingly, we demand a comprehensive investigation into the sequence of events that led to Mr. Shah Alam's death, including DHS's responsibility that may have contributed to this preventable tragedy.

Mr. Shah Alam, a Rohingya refugee with legal status, was reported missing on February 19, 2026, shortly after release by USBP. Mr. Shah Alam was largely blind and did not speak English, coming to the United States on December 24, 2024 after fleeing persecution in Burma, where Rohingya people have faced systemic oppression and genocide. According to publicly available information, on February 19th, USBP took Mr. Shah Alam from Erie County custody, transporting him to a coffee shop miles from his family's residence. According to his family, Mr. Shah Alam had a severe disability, could not read, write, or use a phone, and could not communicate independently. Despite these significant occupational challenges and the inability to find shelter or safety on his own, USBP abandoned Mr. Shah Alam at an unsafe location in the middle of winter, without proper care, and without his family to ensure his safety.¹ Tragically, several days after he was reported missing, Mr. Shah Alam was found dead on the night of February 24th.

This tragedy raises serious questions about USBP's responsibility surrounding the circumstances that contributed to Mr. Shah Alam's death, as well as DHS's transportation and release protocols for vulnerable individuals from federal law enforcement custody. This administration's inhumane, abhorrent treatment of immigrants has resulted in entirely preventable deaths and it is our responsibility as Members of Congress to conduct oversight into these matters. In addition to a full timeline of the events involving USBP, we demand a comprehensive, transparent investigation into Mr. Shah Alam's case and request that the Department provide answers to the following questions no later than March 5, 2026.

1. What was the justification behind USBP's involvement in transporting Mr. Shah Alam? Were any other DHS components involved in his transport?
2. What is CBP's protocol for transporting and releasing vulnerable individuals with disabilities?

¹ Wolfe, Jan and Cooke, Kristina. *Near-blind refugee found dead in Buffalo after release by US Border Patrol*. Reuters, February 25, 2026. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/near-blind-refugee-found-dead-buffalo-after-release-by-us-border-patrol-2026-02-26/>

3. What are the standard protocols for “courtesy rides” for transportees that USBP has referenced in statements? Given Mr. Shah Alam was blind and barely spoke English, how was the decision made to drop him somewhere other than his home?
 - a. What steps, if any, were taken to ensure Mr. Shah Alam’s continuity of care upon his release, given his complex medical conditions?
 - b. What translation or interpretation services were offered to Mr. Shah Alam during transit?
 - c. Why was Mr. Shah Alam left at a coffee shop rather than a home address?
 - d. What clothing was Mr. Shah Alam wearing when he was released by USBP? Was he provided any warm clothing given the winter weather?
4. When was DHS notified of Mr. Shah Alam’s release, and why was USBP made responsible for his custody?
 - a. At what point did USBP coordination with Erie County officials fail?
5. A USBP spokesperson stated that Mr. Shah Alam was “not amenable to removal.” When was this determination made?
6. What contact, if any, was made with Mr. Shah Alam’s family prior to his release?
7. Mr. Shah Alam had been missing since February 19th. What actions, if any, were taken by DHS between February 19th and February 24th to attempt to locate Mr. Shah Alam?
8. Will CBP’s Office of Professional Responsibility conduct any disciplinary or remedial actions to ensure DHS personnel involved are held accountable for any potential wrongdoing?
9. How will CBP classify Mr. Shah Alam’s death?
10. What processes or procedures have been immediately put in place following Mr. Shah Alam’s death to ensure this never happens again?

The death of Mr. Shah Alam was entirely preventable. DHS has a moral and legal obligation to conduct a full and transparent investigation, in coordination with state and local officials, to ensure accountability, answer to the American people, and provide justice for the Shah Alam family. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Congressman Timothy M. Kennedy
House Committee on Homeland Security



Ranking Member Jamie Raskin
House Judiciary Committee



Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson
House Committee on Homeland Security



Congresswoman Grace Meng
Chair, Congressional Asian Pacific American
Caucus