Trump administration charges influencer and congressional candidate over ICE protests

Kat Abughazaleh, a 26-year-old Palestinian American and Democratic candidate for Congress in the 9th District of Illinois, has been indicted by the Department of Justice on charges connected to protests outside an ICE facility. The indictment alleges that Abughazaleh and a handful of other protesters conspired on the morning of September 26th to prevent an ICE agent "from discharging the duties of his office, and to injure him in his person or property."

The indictment accuses Abughazaleh and the other protesters named in it of banging on an ICE agent's car and attempting to stop it from entering an ICE facility by physically surrounding it, scratching the word "PIG" into the car, breaking a side mirror, and breaking off a rear windshield wiper. As MSNBC reports, other defendants include Michael Rabbitt, a Cook County Democratic Committee member, and Cat Sharp, a candidate for the Cook County Board of Commissioners, and the charges of assaulting an officer can carry prison sentences of up to eight years.

A video of Abughazaleh being thrown to the ground by an ICE agent outside the Broadview facility went viral in September, and on the same morning as the incident cited in the indictment, she posted a video on X of her and other protesters surrounding an ICE vehicle.

As MSNBC notes, in recent weeks, right-wing accounts have repeatedly posted about her videos, calling for her to be arrested and tagging US Attorney General Pam Bondi. At the

same time, Trump has said that Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson should be jailed for allegedly “failing to protect” ICE officers. The Trump Administration has also charged or threatened criminal charges against others who’ve opposed his agenda, including former FBI Director James Comey, New York Attorney General Letitia James, and New York mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani.

Abughazaleh, who has a background as a journalist and influencer on social media channels like Twitch, posted a video today responding to the indictment, stating:

> *“This is a political prosecution, and a gross attempt to silence dissent, a right protected under the First Amendment. This case is a major push by the Trump administration to criminalize protest and punish anyone who speaks out against them. That’s why I’m going to fight these unjust charges.”*

Abughazaleh goes on to note that “ICE has hit, dragged, thrown, shot with pepper balls, and teargassed hundreds of protesters.” She also calls out the Trump administration for “weaponizing the federal justice system” to scare protesters, but vows “we’re not going to be silent.”

“This case targets our rights to protest, speak freely, and associate with anyone who disagrees with the government.”

https://www.theverge.com/news/809401/kat-abughazaleh-ice-indicted