



One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 2, 2026

Dr. Sean Conley
Acting Director and Chief Medical Officer
Office of Health Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Dr. Conley:

We are writing to follow up on our previous letters to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding the death of Nurul Amin Shah Alam in Buffalo, New York.¹ Since our initial February 27, 2026 letter to DHS calling for an investigation into this tragedy, new details have emerged about the circumstances of Mr. Shah Alam's death following his release from DHS custody. Specifically, the local medical examiner ruled his death a homicide, meaning it was caused by a person's actions or failure to act.² Mr. Shah Alam's death raises serious concerns about the adequacy of medical screening, release protocols, oversight mechanisms within DHS, and particularly the role of the Office of Health Security (OHS), which is responsible for establishing and conducting oversight of standards for the care of individuals in custody. Accordingly, we request that OHS provide all relevant information and documentation regarding oversight of Mr. Shah Alam's death.

Mr. Shah Alam was a 56-year-old Rohingya refugee from Burma who was found dead on Perry Street in Buffalo, New York on February 24, 2026, five days after U.S. Border Patrol agents released him into freezing temperatures alone at night.³ He was nearly blind, spoke almost no English, and did not read, write, or operate a phone. According to his attorney, Mr. Shah Alam also did not know his address or the phone numbers of loved ones.⁴ In the days after his death, DHS

¹ *Congressman Kennedy Leads Congressional Letter Demanding Federal Investigation into Death of Nurul Amin Shah Alam* (Feb. 27, 2026), <https://kennedy.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2373>;

Congressman Kennedy Formally Requests Federal Investigation into Death of Nurul Amin Shah Alam in Letter to New DHS Secretary (Mar. 24, 2026), <https://kennedy.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=2389>.

² *Erie County provides statement regarding the Medical Examiner's Office investigation on the death of Nurul Amin Shah Alam*, ERIE COUNTY DEP'T OF HEALTH (Apr. 1, 2026), <https://www3.erie.gov/health/press/erie-county-provides-statement-regarding-medical-examiners-office-investigation-death-nurul>.

³ Ana Ley, *Border Patrol Left a Refugee at a Cafe. Days Later, He Was Found Dead*, NY TIMES (Feb. 27, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/27/nyregion/myanmar-refugee-buffalo-border-patrol.html>.

⁴ Julia Metraux, *Nurul Amin Shah Alam, Blind Rohingya Refugee Dumped by Border Patrol, Dies in Cold*, MOTHER JONES (Feb. 25, 2026), <https://www.motherjones.com/mojo-wire/2026/02/shah-alam-buffalo-rohingya-blind-man-border-patrol/>.

exhibited its now-typical defensiveness and unwillingness to conduct basic oversight, stating that Border Patrol gave Mr. Shah Alam a “courtesy ride,” and claiming “he showed no signs of distress, mobility issues, or disabilities requiring special assistance.”⁵

It is not clear whether the DHS personnel who took custody of Mr. Shah Alam provided any language interpretation services, and they reportedly did not contact his attorney or family upon release.⁶ Tragically, following his release, Mr. Shah Alam ultimately died of complications from a perforated ulcer precipitated by hypothermia and dehydration—the predictable consequence of being left alone for five days in freezing temperatures with no shelter, food, or water, and an extremely limited ability to communicate.⁷

Mr. Shah Alam’s death raises serious questions about detainee screening, medical care, release protocols for vulnerable individuals, and oversight within DHS—particularly by OHS.⁸ As Ranking Members of the Committee on Homeland Security and the Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology, which has jurisdiction over OHS, we are concerned that an individual with clear visual impairment and communication barriers was not identified as requiring safeguards or protections prior to release. It is unclear whether appropriate guidance exists, whether it was followed, or whether OHS had visibility into the circumstances of Mr. Shah Alam’s death.

An individual who fled genocide only to die alone on a Buffalo street upon his release from United States Government custody demands a full accounting. Accordingly, we request that you provide:

- (1) All OHS-issued or -reviewed policies, guidance, or directives in effect at the time of Mr. Shah Alam’s release governing medical screening, identification of disabilities and vulnerabilities (including visual impairment and limited English proficiency), criteria for the location, time, and coordination of release from DHS custody (including weather considerations), requirements for interpretation services, and continuity-of-care planning prior to release.
- (2) A description of whether and how OHS provides guidance to, reviews, or engages with U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Office of the Chief Medical Officer, including any policies, communications, or directives relevant to decisions about Mr. Shah Alam’s screening and release.
- (3) A written description of, and any documentation relating to, OHS involvement in, awareness of, or review of Mr. Shah Alam’s death. Such documentation should include internal communications, after-action reviews, or referrals for investigation. If OHS did not conduct or participate in a review of his death, we ask that you explain why not.

⁵ DHS (@DHSgov) post on X (Feb. 26, 2026, 3:04 PM), <https://x.com/DHSgov/status/2027112573913665762>.

⁶ Dan Barry, *Where Was Nurul Amin Shah Alam?* NY TIMES (May 11, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/05/12/nyregion/buffalo-refugee-nurul-amin.html>.

⁷ ERIE COUNTY DEP’T OF HEALTH, *supra* note 2.

⁸ *Informational Report on Departmental Inspections*, DHS (Dec. 18, 2024), https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/2024_1218_dmo_plcy_detention_oversight_roles_and_responsibilities.pdf.

- (4) A description of how OHS oversees component compliance with health-related custody and detention policies, including how adverse outcomes (such as death following release from DHS custody) are tracked, reviewed, and addressed, and how many full-time equivalents (FTEs) are assigned to this oversight.
- (5) A description of, and documentation relating to, any steps OHS has taken or plans to take in response to Mr. Shah Alam's death, including updates to policy, training, or oversight processes.

We look forward to your response by no later than June 16, 2026.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security



Timothy M. Kennedy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Emergency Management
and Technology

cc: The Honorable Andrew R. Garbarino, Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security