

# Trump administration mulls decertifying immigration judges' union

[Justin Wise](#) 08/11/19 07:24 AM EDT

The Trump administration has reportedly taken a step to decertify an immigration judges' union that has been repeatedly critical of [President Trump](#) and the White House's policy proposals.

A Department of Justice (DOJ) spokesperson [told The New York Times](#) on Friday that the department filed a petition to the Federal Labor Relations Authority asking whether the National Association of Immigration Judges could have its certification revoked since its members are "management officials" and unable to collectively organize.

Members of the union have denounced the move as misguided and as an attempt to dismantle the group.

"This is a misguided effort to minimize our impact," Judge Amiena Khan, vice president of the judges' union, told the Times. "We serve as a check and balance on management prerogatives and that's why they are doing this to us."

Judge Ashley Tabaddor, the union's president, [told The Washington Post](#) that she thinks the petition is an attempt to "disband and destroy the union."

Immigration judges are unique in that, unlike federal judges, they are appointed by the attorney general and considered employees of the DOJ, the Times noted. Representatives of the immigration judges' union are permitted to publicly speak about DOJ policies that are deemed political. Sitting judges are prohibited from doing so.

Khan and Tabaddor have continued to publicly criticize the Trump administration's policies throughout the president's two-plus years in the White House. For example, the union in 2018 condemned an administration quota system that [required judges](#) to complete 700 cases annually.

The judges' union had reportedly said that the system hindered due process rights for immigrants in court. Tabaddor had said at the time that the pressure to take on more cases was like "psychological warfare."

BuzzFeed News [reported earlier this year](#) that some immigration judges were leaving their positions because of changes to the court, as well as an increasing backlog driven by the administration's policies. The Justice Department has moved to help with the backlog, which is reportedly more than 830,000 cases.

But the union has still been critical of those efforts.

"I can't work alone, I am reliant on support staff," said Khan. "Right now there are two judges to one support staff person," which has delayed the progress of cases despite the additional judges, she said.

The union is planning to officially respond to the petition once it receives a notice from the Federal Labor Relations Authority. The petition will likely lead to an investigation from the Federal Labor Relations Authority, a DOJ spokesperson told the Times.