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NPR fact checks Kristi Noem on ICE detaining US citizens

NOVEMBER 5, 2025 · 4:20 PM ET

HEARD ON ALL THINGS CONSIDERED



Adrian Florido

3-Minute Listen

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US citizens were restrained, questioned, and in some cases held for days in ways that conflict with the government's public assurances.

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JUANA SUMMERS, HOST:

Top Trump administration officials often deny detaining U.S. citizens in their ongoing immigration sweeps across the country. Here's Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem in Indiana last week.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

KRISTI NOEM: There's no American citizens have been arrested or detained. We focus on those that are here illegally. And anything that you would hear or report that would be different than that is simply not true and false reporting.

SUMMERS: Here to fact-check the administration's claims is NPR's Adrian Florido. Hi there.

ADRIAN FLORIDO, BYLINE: Hi, Juana.

SUMMERS: So, Adrian, Secretary Noem claimed that her agents conducting these roundups have not arrested or detained any U.S. citizens. Tell us, is this true?

FLORIDO: It is not true, and there's plenty of evidence that it's false. Many news outlets, including NPR, have reported on and spoken with U.S. citizens who've been arrested or temporarily detained by immigration agents. I recently spoke with one, George Retes. He's an Army veteran who was pulled out of his car by federal agents who were raiding a farm north of Los Angeles.

GEORGE RETES: They sit me down on the dirt with my hands zip-tied behind my back. They asked me for my ID once. I let them know it's in my car and I could provide proof I'm a citizen. They didn't care. They never asked me again. They just left it at that.

FLORIDO: Retes was held for three days, Juana, before being released. DHS later said that he was arrested for becoming violent and refusing to cooperate with agents, which he denies. He was never charged. And he's just one of many U.S. citizens we know have been detained or arrested.

SUMMERS: Well, do we have a sense of how many U.S. citizens have been detained or arrested?

FLORIDO: The government doesn't track this. What we know is gleaned from videos, lawsuits from detained citizens and tracking by news outlets. ProPublica recently tallied up at least 170 U.S. citizens arrested or temporarily detained, but

that was almost certainly an undercount. In late September, when immigration agents raided an apartment building in Chicago, for example, as NPR reported, they detained dozens of U.S. citizens in just one night.

SUMMERS: You mentioned lawsuits that have been filed by U.S. citizens. What are we learning in court about these arrests and detentions?

FLORIDO: The lawsuits are piling up. The ACLU filed one in LA on behalf of several Latinos who said they'd been racially profiled. One of them, Jason Brian Gavidia is a U.S. citizen who was working at a tow-truck yard when Border Patrol agents marched in. They handcuffed him and they held him against a fence. He told me about how he pleaded with the agents.

JASON BRIAN GAVIDIA: Let me show you my ID. Let me prove to you my legal status. They don't care about that. They care the fact that I was brown and that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. And that is not right. We're in America. That is not right.

FLORIDO: Gavidia was let go after about half an hour, but another U.S. citizen was arrested in that raid and held for more than four days. That racial profiling case is working its way through the federal courts. Other plaintiffs in other lawsuits are trying to stop federal agents from entering private property without warrants. Some are seeking compensation for violation of civil rights.

SUMMERS: Adrian, we've talked about Secretary Noem's false claim, but what else does the government say?

FLORIDO: Well, in past statements, DHS has acknowledged arresting or temporarily detaining U.S. citizens but has said it does not target them and has said that those temporarily detained have been set free once agents determine their legal status. The people ICE has arrested are often accused of assaulting agents, but in many cases, no charges were pursued. Civil rights lawyers involved in these cases who I've spoken to say that agents are casting such a wide net, rounding people up without reasonable suspicion and threatening the rights of everyone in this country.

SUMMERS: NPR's Adrian Florido in Los Angeles, thank you so much.

FLORIDO: Thank you, Juana.

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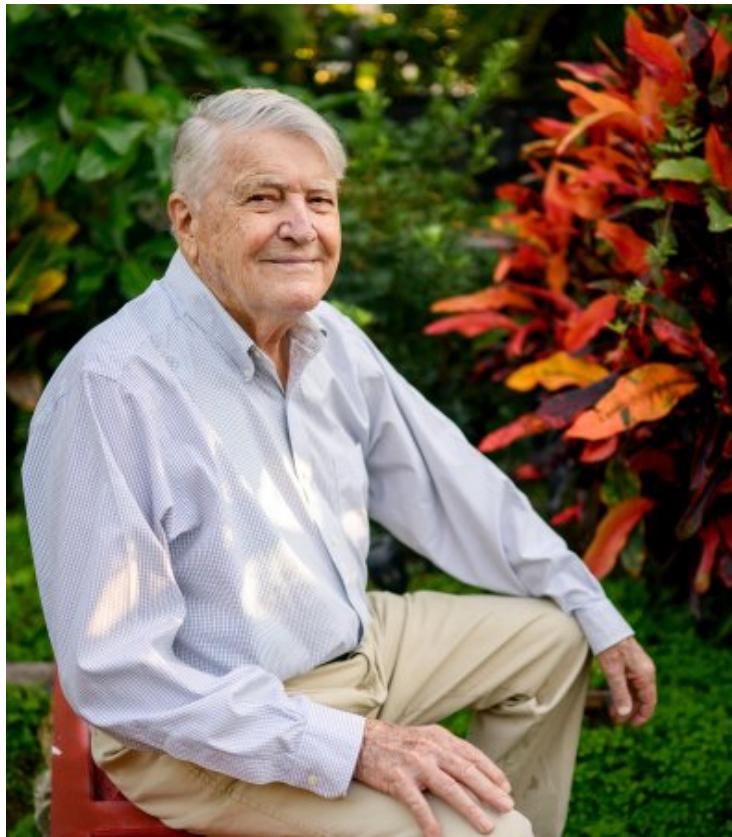
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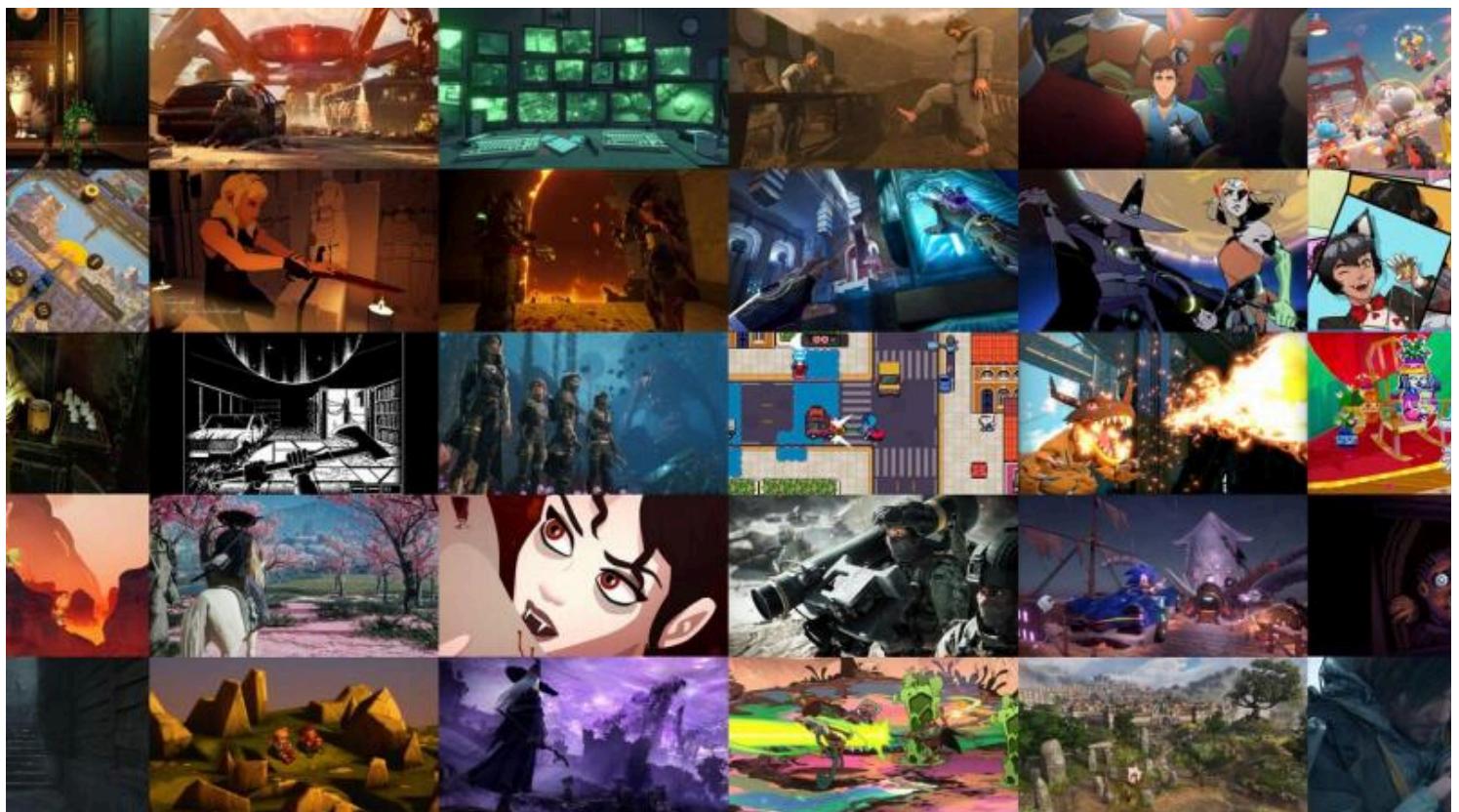
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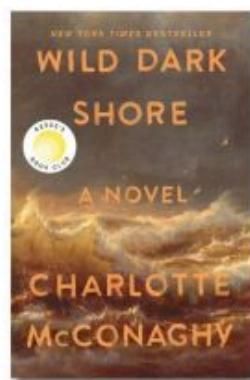
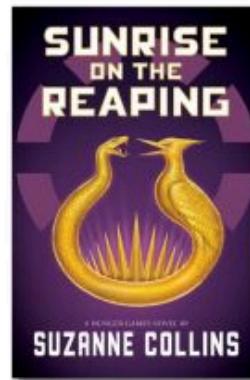
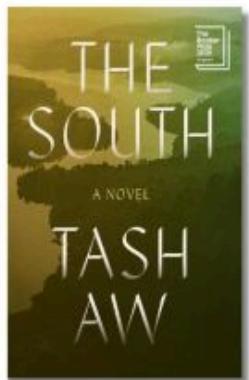
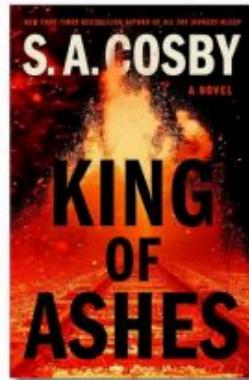
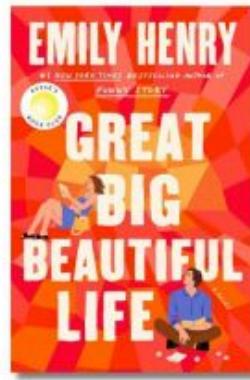
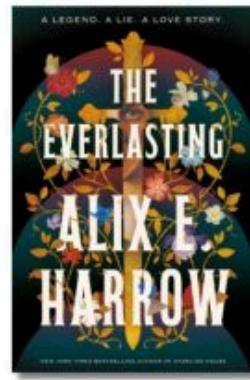
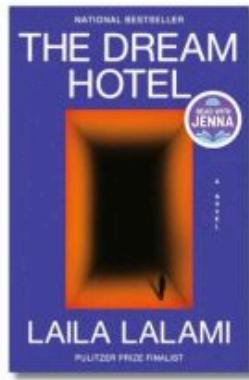
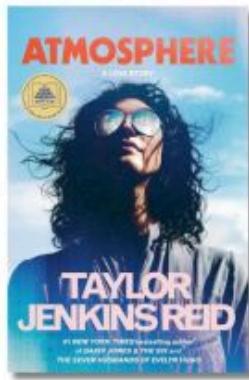
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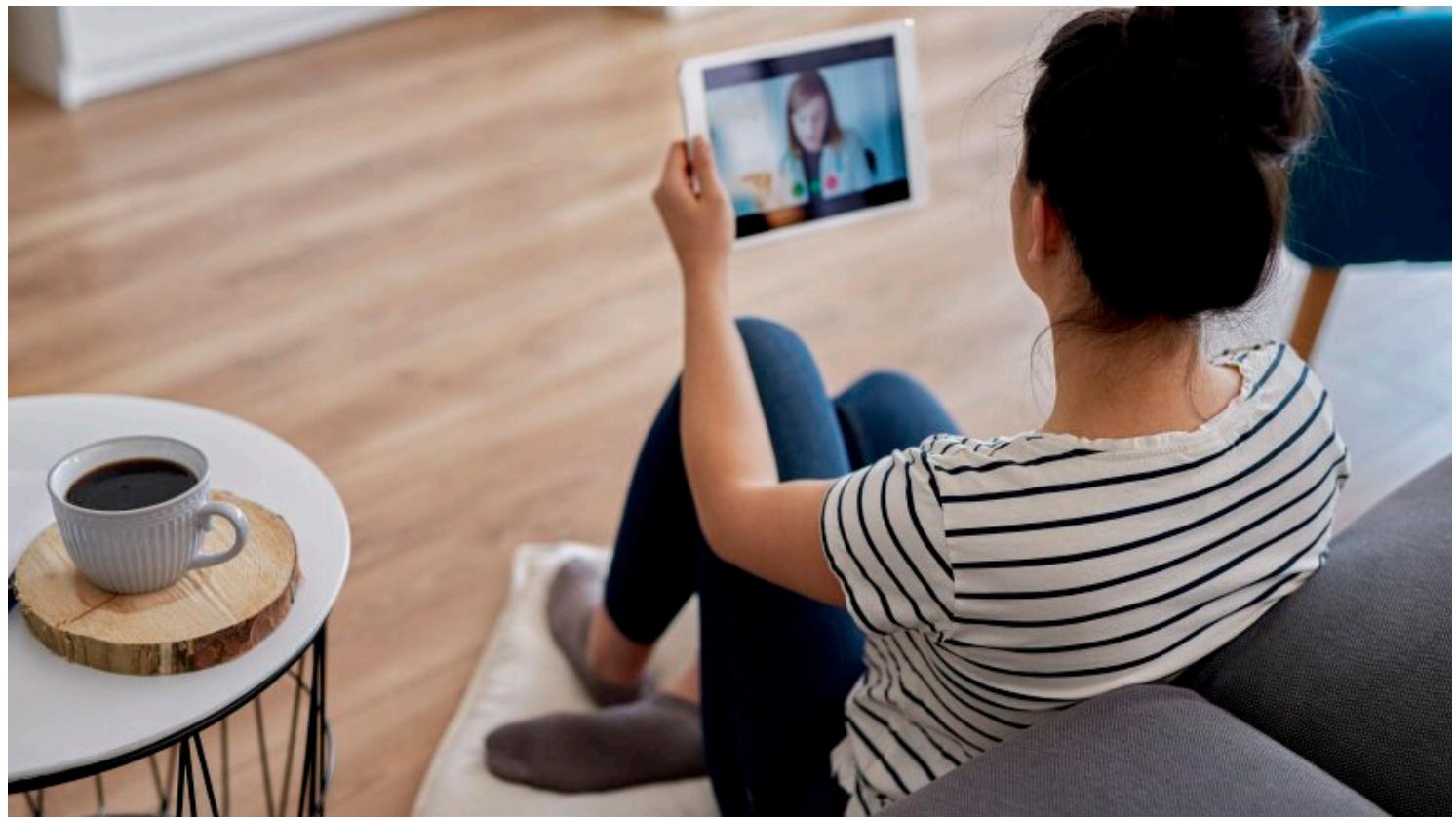
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