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Afghan family of 5 held in Los Angeles released

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Detained at the Los Angeles airport for four days, a five-member Afghan family has been freed and allowed to travel to Washington, American media reported on Tuesday.

Issued with special immigrant visas, the family had been given approval to move to the United States. But the five people were detained after landing at the airport.

Border patrol personnel stopped the Afghans on Thursday when they arrived at the airport. The family's head has worked for the American government in Afghanistan  for a decade.

He was sent to a detention centre. According to The News York Times, the man's spouse and three children were held separately. But they were freed hours before a hearing before the Federal District Court.

On Saturday night, the judge issued a temporary order preventing the mother and children from being moved to a family detention centre in Texas.

Mark Rosenbaum, a lawyer with Public Counsel, hailed the release as a positive step. "This is a real victory in terms of the government acknowledging that the family does not pose a threat."

Federal officials will meet the family on April 5 to see their visa documents. Until then, the Afghans would have no restrictions on their liberties, the Times said.

Government officials told the court the family had been given back passports and visas and would be interviewed on April 5 in Seattle to determine if they were eligible to use those visas to stay in the US.

US District Judge Josephine Staton said she would retain jurisdiction of the case and that the government could not detain or remove the family from the US without providing a 72 hours notice to their attorneys.