

GUIDE

Deportation Lease Termination

**What to Do If You're Forced to Leave
the U.S. but Still Have a Lease**

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE FORCED TO LEAVE THE U.S. BUT STILL HAVE A LEASE

Lawyers for Civil Rights has received a growing number of inquiries concerning community members facing deportation—or already deported—who still have active leases or contracts in the U.S.

Here's what to know and what steps you can take.

Are You Still Responsible for Your Lease Agreement?

In most cases, **yes**.

Even if you are no longer in the U.S., a lease agreement remains legally binding unless it is formally terminated or amended by the parties.

However, landlords are generally required to make reasonable efforts to re-rent the unit and reduce losses (known as “mitigation”).

What You Can Do

Start with your lease. Make sure you have a copy of your lease. If you do not, ask your landlord or property manager for one.

Review it carefully. Look for sections about early termination, notice requirements, renewal, and automatic renewal. If your lease does not say what happens after the first year, you may be a month-to-month tenant, which can change how much notice you need to give.

Contact your landlord as soon as possible.

Communicate in writing by email, text message, or letter (see template below). Attach a copy of your lease. Ask to end the lease early or work out a reasonable solution.

Take pictures or screenshots of your message, and confirm that your landlord received it.

Ask for help if you need it.
If possible, ask someone you trust to help you:

- Return your keys
- Remove your belongings
- Communicate with your landlord or property manager

When asking for legal help, include your lease.

Attach your lease to any message you send to a legal aid organization. This helps them understand your situation and provide more accurate guidance.

Important Things to Know

- Every situation is different, so talk with your landlord first.
- Landlords may still try to collect money owed under the lease.
- If you have bank accounts or assets in the U.S., those could be affected.
- You may still have options, so it's important to reach out to your landlord early. That alone signals good faith and willingness to engage.
- If you need help, contact a legal aid or local housing organization.

Reasonable Resolution Examples

Depending on your situation, landlords may be open to different types of arrangements or agreements. Some solutions include:

- **Subletting:** The landlord allows you to find a new tenant who takes over your lease under the same terms (same rent, same end date, etc.).
- **Reassignment:** The landlord signs a new lease directly with someone you find to replace you as the tenant.
- **Recruiting a New Tenant:** You help the landlord identify a replacement tenant and they enter into a new lease.
- **Settlement:** You and your landlord agree on a lump-sum payment or a reduced amount to resolve any remaining rent or obligations.

Always get any agreement in writing before sending money or returning keys.



MORE RESOURCES

lawyersforcivilrights.org/
resources



Template Letter You Can Use

Subject: Request for Lease Termination

[LANDLORD'S NAME]

[LANDLORD'S ADDRESS]

[LANDLORD'S EMAIL ADDRESS]

DATE *[MM/DD/YYYY]*

Dear *[Landlord/Property Manager Name]*,

I am writing regarding my lease for *[unit address]*, which is currently set to run from *[lease start date]* to *[lease end date]*.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, I am no longer able to remain in the United States and cannot continue occupying *[unit address]*.

Given this situation, I am respectfully requesting to terminate my lease early, with a proposed termination date of *[proposed move-out/termination date]*, or to work with you on a reasonable resolution.

I understand my responsibilities under the lease and am committed to reaching an agreement that allows you to re-rent the unit as soon as possible. I am willing to cooperate in facilitating access to the unit, returning keys, and supporting a smooth transition.

Please let me know how you would like to proceed. I am available for a phone call to discuss next steps.

Sincerely,

[Tenant's Full Name and Contact Information]