

United States - Trump Unshackles Deportation Force Against Undocumented Immigrants

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Under Trump's new guidelines, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are increasingly stepping up raids, roundups and deportations of undocumented immigrants. His press secretary said, "The President wanted to take the shackles off ICE and Border Patrol agents," and these thugs have been given the green light.

A February 26 front page article in *The New York Times* is headlined "Agents Discover a New Freedom on Deportations, Emboldened by Trump."

A subhead says, "Quick Shift as Officers Expand Targets and Start Roundups."

The article begins, "In Virginia, [ICE] agents waited outside a church shelter where undocumented immigrants had gone to stay warm. In Texas and Colorado, agents went into courthouses, looking for foreigners who had arrived for hearings on other matters. At Kennedy International Airport in New York, passengers arriving after a five-hour flight from San Francisco were asked to show their documents before they were allowed to get off the plane."

People on such domestic flights are not required to have passports, birth certificates or any other proof of citizenship, just photo IDs.

Such incidents are occurring across the country. I learned of two in Latino areas in the cities of Palo Alto and San Mateo near where I live in the San Francisco Bay Area, from Latino friends of mine. In what is known as East Palo Alto, to distinguish it from the largely white section that includes the prestigious Stanford University, ICE agents stopped every car with Latino occupants.

I wouldn't have known of these two raids if my friends hadn't told me about them, as the media ignored them. While Trump attacks much of the mainstream media for anything he claims is negative about him, the fact is that with the exception of some like *The New York Times*, there has been very little coverage of this deportation campaign in the capitalist press, and virtually none on the TV networks or stations like CNN.

The *Times* article continues, "In Southern California, in one of the first major roundups during the administration, officers detained 161 people with a wide range of felony and misdemeanor convictions, and 10 who had no criminal history at all."

As Amy Goodman, host of the Democracy Now TV and radio show reported on February 22, "The White house is moving to expand the DHS's authority to deport millions of undocumented immigrants and to increase the number of ICE and Border Patrol agents Almost any undocumented person in the country could be detained and deported, even if they've never committed a crime [while in the U.S.]. A traffic violation or mere suspicion of committing a crime

could now be grounds for deportation. Any immigrant who cannot prove they've been in the United States for over two years could be deported without a hearing. Any migrant, regardless of nationality, who crosses the southern border will be deported to Mexico while they await deportation hearings....[The new guidelines] call for the prosecution of parents who seek to reunite their family by using smugglers to bring their children into the United States."

For the time being, the only exceptions are for the immigrants who were brought into the country as children that Obama said would not be deported, but that could change at the whim of the White House.

Cesar Vargas, co-director of the DREAM [referring to those brought in as children] Action Coalition, said on the same Democracy Now program, "We are seeing now a deportation force on steroids. The deportation force was created with George Bush, and strengthened with President Obama, who deported more people than any [previous] President. Donald Trump has taken the keys of this deportation machine, and refueling it and taking it over 100 miles per hour, really aggressively pursuing and targeting every immigrant..."

The *Times* article quotes one ICE agent who took part in the raid in Southern California, "Before, we used to be told, 'You can't arrest those people,' and we'd be disciplined for being insubordinate if we did. Now those people are priorities again. And there are a lot of them here."

The article also quotes a joint statement of the "unions" representing ICE and Border Patrol agents: "Morale amongst our agents and officers has increased exponentially since the signing of the orders."

The organizations of the police, IEC and the Border Patrol are not labor unions. These armed forces of the capitalist state are anti-worker. Historically, such forces have been hotbeds of the extreme right, and are so today in the United States. The police associations all across the U.S. with negligible exceptions endorsed Trump in the elections, as did those of ICE and the Border Patrol.

The *Times* reports, "A whirlwind of activity has overtaken ICE headquarters in recent weeks, with employees attending back-to-back meetings about how to carry out President Trump's plans. 'Some people are like: "This is great. Let's give them all the tools they need," said a senior staff member at headquarters'....

"Two officials in Washington said that the shift - and the new enthusiasm that has come with it - seems to have encouraged pro-Trump political comments and banter as brazen or gung-ho, like remarks about their jobs becoming 'fun.' Those who take less of a hard line on unauthorized immigrants feel silenced..."

The current anti-immigrant campaign is just the beginning. It's aim is to frighten and intimidate not only the undocumented, but their families and friends. Most in the Latino communities have ties to the undocumented among them.

To carry out Trump's plans will require a significantly larger deportation force. That's why Trump proposes to enlarge ICE by 50 percent, from 20,000 agents to 30,000, and increase the Border Patrol by 5,000. It will take time to recruit and train agents on this scale. The effort will gradually step up as this is done, until it reaches the massive scale of millions of deportations Trump wants.

Will his projections materialize? That depends on how massive the counter-mobilization becomes.

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