

Unitd States - New Revelations of Trump's Criminal Cruelty

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When asylum seekers and other immigrants are rounded up by the Border Patrol, they are first held in detention centers before being sent on to agencies that are supposed to rule on their cases.

Border Patrol agents have for some time blocked reporters from entering their detention centers. They were forced to allow lawyers for inmates some access, and some of these reported on the truly horrible conditions to local newspapers as well as left leaning news sources such as The Nation magazine and Democracy Now.

In previous articles I have reported what these lawyers found.

But recent developments have catapulted these revelations into main stream media. As a result, some reporters and Democratic politicians have gained access to the centers.

One was an investigation by the Department of Homeland Security's own Office of Inspector General, whose report was publically released. The DHS oversees Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Border Patrol is ICE's armed enforcement agency.

We are used to hearing from DHS, ICE and Border Patrol that all the reports of the terrible conditions in the detention centers are false news. That explains why the report from inside the DHS itself has had a broad impact.

The *New York Times* article on the report was headlined "Squalor Pervasive in Detention Centers". The article said, "In June, inspectors ... visited five facilities in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas [the border with Mexico], and found children had few spare cloths and no laundry facilities.

"Many migrants were given only wet wipes to clean themselves and bologna sandwiches to eat, causing constipation and other health problems, according to the report. Children at two of the five facilities in the area were not given hot meals until inspectors arrived.

"Overcrowding was so severe that when the agency's inspectors visited some of the facilities, migrants banged on cells and pressed notes to windows begging for help.

" 'At one facility, some single adults were held in standing-room-only conditions for a week, and at another, some single adults were held more than a month in overcrowded cells,' according to the report...."

Everyone held in those centers is supposed to be released into the next stage within 72 hours.

The article also reported "At a news conference ... doctors who care for children released from the facilities said they were surprised more had not died. At least six migrant children have died in federal custody or shortly after they were released since September.

"They described children having lifesaving medication taken away, or released with serious ailments

but without any medical records from the time they were detained. One doctor described how hard it was to keep her newborn baby warm while in custody.

“ ‘This baby has been given a plastic blanket, and despite her best efforts, her little newborn’s fingers and toes were still blue,’ [the doctor said.]”

Another report that was printed in *The New York Times*, based on interviews done by that newspaper and the *El Paso Times* of one facility in Clint, Texas –sealed off from the town by razor wire – took up two pages.

The report was titled, “Hungry, Scared and Sick: Inside Clint’s Razor Wire — Accounts from a Child Detention Complex in Texas Are the Stuff of Nightmares.”

Border Patrol leaders in the area have rejected complaints about degrading conditions. “But a review of the operations in Clint ... shows that the the agency’s leadership knew for months that some children had no beds to sleep on, no way to clean themselves and sometimes went hungry.”

Here are just some of what the long article revealed:

Some agents, appalled by what they were overseeing, agreed to be interview on condition of anonymity. “Outbreaks of scabies, shingles and chickenpox were spreading among the hundreds of children who were being held in cramped cells, agents said.

“The stench of the children’s dirty clothing was so strong it spread to the agents’ own clothing – people in town would scrunch their noses when they left work. The children cried constantly.

“One girl seemed likely enough to try to kill herself that the agents made her sleep on a cot in front of them, so they could watch her as they were processing new arrivals.”

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“One day this month [June] 20 girls were crowded into one cell, so packed that some were sprawled on the floor. Toddlers could be seen in some cells, cared for by older children.”

“One of the cells functioned as a quarantine unit or ‘flu cell’ for children with contagious diseases; employees have at times worn medical gloves and masks to protect themselves.”

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“Lawyers who visited the Clint station described children in filthy clothes, often lacking diapers, and with no access to toothbrushes, toothpaste or soap.”

In response to this, a spokesperson for the Trump administration said that the government had no responsibility to “provide toothbrushes, toothpaste or soap” to these children.

On July 21, there was another related exposé released by ProPublica, a non-profit independent news organization.

What they found was a site on Facebook labeled “secret”, which was open only to members. How the ProPublica reporter gained access to it is unknown.

This site was a group of over 9,500 Border Patrol agents who posted racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant and misogynist messages, about immigrants as well as some Democratic Congress people and others.

While the above article in the *New York Times* indicated that some agents were appalled by the conditions they saw and told the reporters about them, the ProPublica revelations show that a high percentage of the some 20,000 agents were on the site.

One post contained a photoshopped image of Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat and member of Democratic Socialists of America, being sexually assaulted by President Trump. Asked by a reporter to respond, she said it was “indicative of the culture” she observed inside the migrant prison she had just visited, and added that she did not feel safe around the Border Patrol agents while there.

The reporter who broke the story, A.C. Thompson, was interviewed on Democracy Now. He said “I’ve been reporting on law enforcement for more than 20 years, and I have never seen anything like this. I have spent time with corrupt cops, cops who went to prison.... I’ve met a lot of bad cops. This is way outside the norms of normal behavior, whether in the civilian world or the law enforcement world.

“There were memes about homophobia, about mocking [CNN anchor] Anderson Cooper’s sexuality. There were memes questioning whether migrants who had died trying to cross the river between the United States and Mexico had actually happened, referring to them as “floaters” and saying that maybe it was all a scheme concocted by the Democrats and liberals. I mean, the levels of antipathy for women, for migrants and just for people in general, very, very high.”

When asked about posts attacking Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, Thompson replied, “There’s a particular sort of vitriol directed at the congresswoman. There were posts depicting her engaged in sexual activities with migrants in detention. There were posts about hurling burritos at her and Congresswoman Veronica Escobar as they visited detention facilities in Clint, Texas.

Ocasio-Cortez tweeted about the high percentage of BP agents on the ‘secret’ site, and added “they’re threatening violence on members of Congress. How do you think they’re treating caged children and families?”

Later, AOC, as she is known, tweeted, “Just left the first CBP facility. I see why BP officers were being so physically and sexually threatening towards me. Officers were keeping women in cells with no drinking water, and told them to drink out of the toilets.”

The Border Patrol detention centers are just one part of the Trump administration’s criminal cruelty towards those seeking to come into the United States, including those seeking asylum.

A new twist is that ICE is pressuring immigrants in church sanctuary, by leveling huge fines against them. The *New York Times* reported one such case:

“Edith Espinal spends her days praying, reading, and when feeling brave, taking short walks outside the Mennonite church in Columbus, Ohio, where she has been living for 21 months. Church leaders have been protecting Ms. Espinal, who crossed the border illegally into the United States more than two decades ago, while she fights a deportation order.

“But earlier in the week, the church secretary handed Ms. Espinal a letter from [ICE] that said she had ‘wilfully’ refused to leave the country, and had ‘connived or conspired’ to prevent deportation, and would owe the government nearly half a million dollars [\$497,777]

“Ms. Espinal was among several undocumented immigrants living in houses of worship who this week [first week in July] received similar notices, the latest measure taken by the Trump

administration in its crackdown on illegal immigration.”

Trump announced that the previously promised raids on Latino communities in 10 cities to arrest undocumented immigrants for deportation would begin soon. He says these raids would be the initial effort to round up and deport one million.

Whether this is bluff on his part to instill fear remains to be seen. But any effort along these lines would likely be met with resistance.

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