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Trump 2.0 Racist Massive Immigrant Detention and Deportation, Community Self-Defense Fights ICE Fascism

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2/15 Mass Deportation as Ethnic Cleansing: on the Ongoing War

Iker Suarez – Black Agenda Report

The Trump raids have begun . In many ways, nothing is new. Despite liberals' best attempts at depicting Trump's policy as qualitatively different, what we are witnessing is merely an intensification of the bipartisan U.S. deportation regime.

In other words, "mass deportation" chants might be new, but mass deportations aren't. During his first term in office, Trump deported fewer people than all previous three administrations. Later, Biden deported twice as many people as Trump. The only thing that substantively changes under the latter is the visibility of these processes. In short, liberals now care. Time for new photo-ops and selective outrage—if that.

Borders, tools of neocolonialism

Independent of liberal outrage, however, the border has long been alive and well. Under both Democrats and Republicans, it has efficiently served its main function: to create a pliable and cheap workforce. A workforce whose condition is best captured by the notion of deportability : the permanent fear of being persecuted for coming from elsewhere, of being profiled and disappeared in a cage, across a fence, or, now, in Guantanamo . You are much less likely to claim your rights—however meager—if interacting with authorities might get you detained or deported. You are much less likely to demand better pay—or to demand anything at all, for that matter—if the threat of la migra can be used by your boss or any self-deputized citizen.

Deportation and immigration enforcement, then, amount to a huge act of class discipline. Deportability produces the immigrant as a racialized underclass, like carceral power and structural racism does with Black Americans. It is the well-known enforcement of the color line, as W.E.B. Du Bois and others like Charisse Burden Stelly have put it, through terror—to recreate international wage hierarchy and structural immobility for particular populations in the core. It is one among the

many mechanisms that have enabled the renovation of racial power in the past half century, one of the key instruments of White Reconstruction and the transition to neo-colonial rule.

Beyond cheap labor: ethnic cleansing

But the visibility and intensification of raids under Trump make an additional point clear. Deportation, mass or not, is an act of ethnic cleansing. It is the deliberate removal of people based on their ethno-national affiliation. That this hides behind racialized constructs of “citizenship” or “criminality” (which lose all their meaning when mere entry is a crime and people of color are structurally criminalized) is besides the point. The fact of racialized removal is the point.

Indeed, the similarities between home raids in the West Bank of Palestine and the Bronx are not just coincidence. (That Trump might bomb Mexico or invade Panama like Israel bombs and invades Palestine is but the other side of the same colonial coin). These possess a structural equivalence that needs to be reckoned with.

As in occupied Palestine, structural mass removal serves to cohere the settler colonial project and its class blocs. First and foremost, it works to restrict access to the entitlements of its privileged global North citizenship—themselves differentially distributed among its internal class and racial strata. A citizenship whose entitlements, admittedly, have been in long-term decline under the pressures of neoliberalism and secular economic stagnation , from wages to rights . But a privileged citizenship nevertheless, one that millions across the Global South aspire to.

Make no mistake—the elevation of mass deportation from disavowed policy to the status of cultural symbol is a sign of crisis. A sign that core ruling classes, unable or unwilling to pacify their masses through concessions or redistribution, need to find outlets for popular rage. A sign that capital is increasingly unable to safeguard even the basis of its power since at least 1945: the pacification of the imperial core. Mass deportation should be understood, in this sense, as a measure related fundamentally to the growingly precarious production of social peace in Northern societies.

In this light, just as Native and Black Americans were and are constantly removed and enclosed, so are immigrants—many of them, indeed, “indigenous.” Like Palestinians, then, their mass removal, gradual or sudden, invisible or spectacular, conservative or liberal, is an instrument of colonization.

Mass deportation as misnomer

In other words, like Dylan Rodriguez tells us for “mass incarceration”, mass deportation is a misnomer. It is not simply a removal of “aliens.” Like racial categories before, now naturalized state categories like “alien” hide the demarcation of populations for particular purposes: genocide, enslavement, or, today, removal—more precisely, super-exploitation under threat of removability.

“Mass deportation” and immigration enforcement, then, safeguard the imperial entitlements of the “citizen”, however hollow and internally stratified these might be. In doing so, “mass deportation” is the continuation of a project of conquest—conquest by other means. A conquest that responds to changing conditions—the goal today being not the taking of land, but the guarding of the established class-race bloc of Global North labor aristocracy—but a conquest nevertheless.

In the final analysis, of course, conquest is war. In his recent Black radical masterpiece *Tip of the Spear*, Orisanmi Burton argues that prisons are war . Recovering the organic thought of 20th century imprisoned Black revolutionaries, he demystifies the liberal framework by which the prison is a neutral institution of the law that confines “criminals”. Similarly, the border is not a neutral institution geared against “aliens” or “illegals”. Rather, to use Burton’s pithy phrase: borders are war.

We can think of “mass incarceration” and “mass deportation”—misnomers in their liberal reformism but still functional as empirical descriptors—as twin dynamics of conquest. Along with reservations and ongoing indigenous elimination, both apparatuses and their many and overlapping expressions—police, prisons, ICE, borders, detention, deportation—materially reproduce the subjugated race-class position of nonwhite citizen and immigrant populations. Both contain and regulate the presence of potentially antagonistic surplus populations. And both disappear unwanted bodies to safeguard the entitlements of nominally post-racial settler citizenship, continuing to racialize access to the labor aristocracy.

That borders are war is not simply a metaphor. “Mass deportation” is the continuation of a long war of conquest. For it is the same state and parastate powers—supported by similar, if diversified, class alliances—using similarly targeted and organized mass violence to maintain the loot of centuries. The same populations whose mobility—literal and social—is seen as a threat to order, despite the abundance of multiculturalist incantations.

Imperial and imperialized nations

In the meantime, Trump’s escalation has been met by leftist leaders throughout Latin America with national-popular demands, from simple calls for migrant dignity to threats on US military power. While most have ultimately come to agreements with Trump after initial standoffs, reactions by Colombian president Gustavo Petro, Honduras president Xiomara Castro and

Mexico's president Claudia Sheinbaum make one thing abundantly clear: that the national question of the peripheries is inextricable from emigration to the core. The oppression of the nations of the Global South is one and the same with the oppression of immigrants in the North—the international and domestic sides of the same imperialist phenomenon. As Amílcar Cabral once wrote, neocolonialism is “at work on two fronts”—core and periphery. National liberation in late neocolonial times, then, is intimately bound with the core's migrant question.

In the heart of the empire, meanwhile, the colonial question—domestic or international—is never on the ballot. “Mass deportation” is bipartisan policy. “Mass incarceration” and police funding are not substantially challenged by either party—whatever their rhetoric. Indeed, as liberal antiracism sides with genocide, we come to the conclusion that antiracism without anti-imperialism is simply white supremacy in a more sophisticated form—“disguised” and “calculated”, as George Jackson may have it. Finally, genocide in Gaza, the second cold war with China, and the neoliberal plunder of the South by U.S. monopolies are not even in question—on the contrary, parties compete in hawkishness. Only rhetoric changes.

In short, white supremacy is not up for election—never has been. Neither is, for that matter, even the tamest anti-neoliberal redistribution. Only demons and demented empire. May it fall in its senility, and with it, the ongoing escalation of ethnic cleansing hidden under other names.

3/20: Prominent Chinese-American Group Opposes Bill That Targets Chinese Students

Talia Mullin - ScheerPost

On March 14, Republicans in the US House of Representative proposed a bill that would prevent Chinese nationals from being able to obtain student visas. The Committee of 100, a group of notable Chinese-Americans, released a statement condemning the bill, reports the South China Morning Post (SCMP).

The committee was founded in 1998 and its founding members include famous cellist Yo-Yo Ma, philanthropist Oscar Tang, veteran investment banker Henry Tang and architect I.M. Pei. The group was founded in order “to address the critical issues impacting the Chinese community in America and help foster positive relations between the U.S. and Greater China.”

Current non-partisan chairman of the committee and former US ambassador to China from 2011 to 2014, Gary Locke, said that “Shutting the door on Chinese students doesn't just betray our values, it weakens our leadership in science, technology, and innovation,” and that the US “has always thrived by welcoming the brightest minds from around the world.”

Locke continued, “The Stop CCP Visas Act is not just exclusionary but self-defeating. We must stand for opportunity, not fear, and ensure that talent and progress continue to flourish in our nation.”

The bill — officially dubbed the “Stop Chinese Communist Prying by Vindicating Intellectual Safeguards in Academia Act” — was originally sponsored by Republican House member Riley Moore of West Virginia and would block Chinese citizens from getting any one of the three main types of student visas. Chinese nationals would not be allowed to enter the US on vocational visas, academic student category visas nor as exchange visitors.

“Every year we allow nearly 300,000 Chinese nationals to come to the US on student visas. We've literally invited the CCP to spy on our military, steal our intellectual property, and threaten national security,” Moore said in defense of the bill.

He mentioned a specific case at the University of Michigan where 5 Chinese students were “charged with misleading authorities about their activities near a remote military site.”

The case and pressure from lawmakers resulted in U-M terminating their longstanding partnership with Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Though the newly proposed act is one of the broadest and most candid acts of aggression by the U.S. towards Chinese nationals, it is not the first. Prior legislation against the Chinese came in the form of staunch limitations on travel and immigration or has targeted more specific groups such as graduate students in certain STEM fields.

Near the end of his first term, Trump made a presidential proclamation which canceled 1,000 visas “for certain Chinese graduate students and researchers with ties to China's military fusion strategy to prevent them from stealing and otherwise appropriating sensitive research.” The Biden administration did nothing to reverse the policy.

Chinese students who used to make up the largest foreign group in the U.S. have seen steady decreases in their numbers since 2019 and 2020, demonstrating how the geopolitical rivalry and deteriorating ties between the two countries has had direct effects on Chinese students studying in the US.

Asian-American groups, such as the Committee of 100, also warn that these sorts of actions can stoke anti-Asian sentiments throughout the U.S. population.

The Committee of 100 wrote in their statement:

“Suggesting that every Chinese student – regardless of background, intentions, or beliefs – is a national security threat is not only inaccurate but also fuels xenophobia, discrimination, and hostility towards an entire group of people – including Chinese-Americans here in the US... Chinese and Chinese-American students have long contributed to America’s scientific, technological, and economic progress, and such rhetoric undermines their ability to learn, collaborate, and thrive in an environment free from suspicion and prejudice.”

The committee’s concerns were corroborated by a survey they conducted in September which found that most Chinese-Americans saw the worsening relationship between the US and China had fuelled discrimination and hateful rhetoric. Lastly, the majority of respondents to the survey also agreed that the United States government was not doing enough to combat rising discrimination.

2/21: Undocumented Workers Prepare To Clean Up L.A.’s Fires Amid ICE Raids

Hilary Beaumont – Portside

In the aftermath of the devastating wildfires that tore through Los Angeles last month, undocumented day laborers will likely make up a significant portion of the workforce tasked with clearing debris and rebuilding homes. As they navigate the environmental hazards of this work, they’re also facing the Trump administration’s escalating crackdown on immigrants.

The threat is real. On his first day in office, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency at the border, paving the way for military operations in the borderlands. Immigration and Customs Enforcement swiftly followed with raids, arresting thousands in cities including Chicago, New York, Miami, Atlanta and San Diego. In Los Angeles, ICE worked with other federal agencies in an enforcement operation. Federal law enforcement agencies are planning “large scale” immigration raids by the end of February, according to a leaked memo obtained by the L.A. Times. Even before Joe Biden left office, the U.S. Border Patrol conducted a raid in Bakersfield, Calif.

For day laborers in Los Angeles and beyond, anxiety is mounting, said Nadia Marin Molina, co-executive director of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON). At a recent “Know Your Rights” workshop at the Pasadena Community Job Center, workers expressed concern. “People were saying they were worried,” she said, noting that their fears were intensified by social media posts warning of raids, not all of which are accurate. (The job center serves as a hub for immigrant workers seeking employment, including those who are undocumented.)

Instilling fear is a central element of the crackdown, she said. Yet the undocumented workers preparing to clear debris from the Eaton and Pacific Palisades fires face other pressures — chief among them, the need to make money for themselves and their families. Workers interviewed for this story said those pressures have kept them focused on the work ahead. They also say they want to give back to the country that has offered them a tenuous refuge.

Luis, who asked to be identified only by his first name out of fear for his safety, said he plans to apply for a job to help clear debris from the fires — so long as he has the proper protective equipment. After a climate disaster, large national companies will often hire local day laborers through subcontractors. “We’re available, we’re here, ready to help,” Luis said in Spanish

But even as he prepared to help with the process of rebuilding, Luis had a heavy heart. Four days after the Eaton fire, his family in Mexico called with the news that his sister had died. Because of his immigration status, he cannot return home to mourn with them. Leaving would mean risking his ability to return to the U.S., where his wife lives. “It makes me feel bad, but I have to keep my mind busy because of that,” he said.

Luis has been alarmed by Trump’s rhetoric and his pledge to remove undocumented immigrants from the country. As he campaigned for office, the president called unauthorized immigrants “migrant criminals” and “gang members” who are “poisoning our country.” “Yes, I feel fear, but at the same time, I feel a desire to move forward and work,” Luis said in Spanish.

Not all day laborers feel frightened by the Trump administration's aggressive actions against people without legal status. Jonathan, who asked to be identified only by his first name for safety, still plans to wait outside Home Depot for work — despite the risk of ICE raids.

The Ecuadorian crossed the southern border in May 2024 and is seeking asylum, though he has no long-term permission to stay. He fled after witnessing gang members murder his boss over a debt. Fearing for his life, he moved to another city, but after receiving a threatening message demanding money, he decided to leave Ecuador.

Jonathan traveled to Juárez, Mexico, climbed the border wall — cutting his fingers on razor wire — and was briefly detained by ICE before being released with an ankle monitor, which was later removed. He then took a bus to Los Angeles, where he now lives and works.

At first, Jonathan believed Trump would only deport immigrants with criminal records — but ICE raids quickly proved otherwise. On Jan. 26, agents arrested nearly 1,200 people in a single day; nearly half had no criminal history, according to NBC News.

Jonathan calls the arrests unjust. "There are many people without papers who are helping make this country better," he said, though he agrees that those with criminal records should be deported.

Still, he isn't afraid. He hopes to stay and continue sending money home. "If God allows, I'll stay," he said in Spanish. "If not, I'll leave if the state tells me to."

Los Angeles will likely need his help. Across the country, immigrant labor — much of it undocumented — plays a critical role in rebuilding efforts after natural disasters, which are becoming increasingly common due to climate change. In California, an estimated 40% of construction workers are foreign-born, many without legal status. Nationally, more than a third of workers in some trades, such as drywalling and roofing, are undocumented.

Marin Molina said people who are calling for mass deportations may not realize how much the country relies on immigrant labor to clean up after climate disasters. She pointed to how day laborers had rebuilt communities after Hurricane Katrina devastated Louisiana and Hurricane Sandy hit New York. One in four workers who were responsible for cleaning up after Hurricane Katrina were undocumented, one study found.

Both California and Los Angeles have sanctuary laws that prevent local police from sharing someone's immigration status with Immigration and Customs Enforcement — providing some protection. But Marin Molina of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network said sanctuary laws do not remove the threat entirely because the Trump administration is sending federal agents to those jurisdictions.

However, the situation is even more dire in states like Texas that don't have sanctuary laws, and where local authorities have said they want to work with the new administration. "Immigrant community members won't be able to trust their own local police departments to protect them, and instead, have to be afraid that police or sheriffs are going to become immigration agents and turn them over. So that's definitely a threat to workers in [those] places," Marin Molina said.

For now, Jonathan and Luis have joined other immigrant workers in volunteering with the Pasadena Community Job Center, clearing brush and distributing water to residents of the mostly immigrant community impacted by the fires. The job center, which is part of the NDLO network, has stepped up to provide mutual aid after the wildfires. "We're showing gratitude by giving back," Jonathan said. "It's our way of reciprocating to the country that opened its doors to us."

2/1: 'First they came': Migrants, trans people are first targets of Trump's fascist rule

Melinda Butterfield – Struggle-La Lucha

Jan. 31 – The first 12 days of the new Trump administration have seen an avalanche of attacks on the working class and oppressed peoples of the United States and the whole world. Federal workers, reproductive rights, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, students opposed to genocide in Gaza, teachers, and AIDS prevention and treatment are just a few of the targets.

The most brutal executive orders have been directed at two especially vulnerable sections of the working class: migrants and transgender people.

The Trump regime has openly and savagely declared its intent to bring home the genocidal policies carried out in Gaza under Biden.

The “shock and awe” of hundreds of executive orders is meant to overwhelm, demoralize, and disorganize workers and our communities, unions, and organizations to make it impossible for people to fight back.

But fighting back, in unity and with massive numbers, is the only way to push back the onslaught and organize a militant resistance to stop this government.

When an executive order freezing all government funding for grants and loans caused state Medicaid and SNAP (food stamp) websites to shut down, the broad and immediate outcry forced the Trump government to temporarily walk back some portions of the freeze. This was a small but important victory.

It's been pointed out that many of Trump's executive orders hold no particular legal weight. Many of them are blatantly illegal and unconstitutional, such as the attempt to repeal birthright citizenship. All will be challenged in court.

But government agencies, businesses, and institutions are rushing to implement these attacks anyway – either because they are eager to do so, or because they fear lawsuits, loss of funding, and repression if they do not.

They all understand that the far-right U.S. Supreme Court has declared Trump and his oligarch allies like Elon Musk exempt from the rule of law.

The word has come down through Trump and his lackeys, IT billionaires who dominate social media, the heights of Corporate America, and the capitalist media: Fascism is what the ruling class wants now, and it's what they shall have.

Democrats in Congress have quietly acquiesced, and sometimes enthusiastically joined in – as Biden and Harris did during the 2024 presidential campaign by refusing to defend trans lives and promoting anti-immigrant measures.

But our power to fight fascism doesn't rest on legalities. It depends on the struggle of class against class. Trump and the bosses understand this very well and will do everything in their power to continue pitting workers against each other to prevent a united resistance.

ICE raids and concentration camps

After Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20, agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) were dispatched to several so-called sanctuary cities, where local laws were enacted under the first Trump term in office to prevent local police from collaborating in federal roundups of the undocumented, and others caught up in the web of repression.

On Jan. 29, Trump announced that a detention camp for 30,000 migrants would be opened in the U.S. Naval base that occupies Guantanamo in Cuba. This is where hundreds of illegally detained men were tortured and imprisoned as part of the U.S. “War on Terror.” Some spent more than two decades imprisoned there, and as of Jan. 6, at least 15 still remain.

Socialist Cuba, which has been fighting for the return of its rightful territory in Guantanamo, condemned Trump's plan.

The ICE gestapo are supposedly going after migrants accused (not convicted) of crimes and offenses. Yet they have also targeted children in schools, patients in hospitals, and workers on the job. Some hospitals and school districts have issued guides for workers on how to resist these illegal ICE incursions.

Indigenous peoples, particularly in the Southwest, have reported a surge in detentions and threatened deportations of tribal members, despite being the original inhabitants of this land. Every person of color is considered fair game.

But there is resistance. In cities across the U.S., people are on the lookout for ICE vehicles and federal agents. Community defenders are patrolling vulnerable neighborhoods and distributing “Know Your Rights” information. People are posting photos and locations of suspicious movements on social media to warn their neighbors.

Is it effective? Trump's “border czar,” Tom Homan, went on CNN to complain about “well-educated” communities defying ICE: “They call it ‘Know Your Rights.’ I call it ‘how to escape arrest.’”

Trans genocide

The forces backing Trump need and want to continue exploiting immigrant labor. They seek to terrorize immigrant communities with deportations in order to create even more brutal conditions and lower wages for those who remain.

In the case of trans people, though, the goal of the fascist right is outright extermination. Executive orders have come down daily attacking the ability of trans people to live their lives.

Already, passports and other federal documents are being altered, nullified, and seized to hamper people's ability to travel and, if necessary, escape the country. Trump has ordered an end to life-saving gender-affirming care for young people under the age of 19 while laying the groundwork for a ban on trans health care for adults, too. And some hospitals are rushing to comply.

A trans restroom ban in federal facilities goes into effect today, including in government offices, airports and much more. The administration will also push for a restroom ban in all private facilities and workplaces. Trans soldiers are being expelled from the U.S. military.

Trans women in federal prisons are to be transferred to men's prisons to be tortured, raped, and murdered, as already happens in many states. Teachers are threatened with being prosecuted as "sex offenders" if they acknowledge the real names and genders of their trans students.

These measures will further escalate anti-trans violence on the streets and in schools, as well as suicides, especially for youth.

All of it is being couched in hypocritical language about "protecting" children and women.

No LGBTQIA+ people are safe from the storm. On Jan. 29, Idaho state representatives called on the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn its 2015 ruling legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide – a move the right-wing justices have already hinted they plan to make soon.

Every statement and executive order names trans people as one of the main causes of the country's problems.

Make no mistake: Extermination of trans lives is the aim of the capitalist ruling class and the Trump regime. This community has been assigned the role of scapegoat.

For trans people, the only option being presented is to go back into the closet. If we cannot or will not do so, we are to be criminalized, imprisoned and tortured, or eventually murdered outright.

Which side are you on?

Many of us learned about the prose poem "First They Came" in school. It was written after World War II by German pastor Martin Niemöller, who originally collaborated with the Nazi regime, then discovered he was not safe from the ravages of fascism himself.

<i>"First they came for the communists And I did not speak out Because I was not a communist "Then they came for the socialists And I did not speak out Because I was not a socialist</i>	<i>"Then they came for the trade unionists And I did not speak out Because I was not a trade unionist "Then they came for the Jews And I did not speak out</i>	<i>Because I was not a Jew "Then they came for me And there was no one left To speak out for me."</i>
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The poem was written as a warning to future generations: Ignore the plight of fascism's first victims at your own peril, because your turn will come.

Some groups targeted by Hitler and his Nazis were left out of the poem, however – notably, the migratory Roma and Sinti peoples, and also queer people, who were shipped off to concentration camps marked with a pink triangle. This symbol was later famously reclaimed by ACT UP in the fight against government neglect of the AIDS epidemic.

One of the first targets of the Nazi regime in Germany was the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin, led by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld. Hirschfeld was a pioneer of gender-affirming health care for trans people. The institute was an advocate and safe haven for trans people in the Weimar era that preceded the Nazi takeover.

On the night of May 6, 1933, a few months after Hitler became chancellor, the Nazis swarmed the institute, destroying its library and records in one the first major book burnings.

So reviled were trans lives that the post-war German capitalist government and many "experts" refused to acknowledge that trans people were victims of the Holocaust until a court case in 2022 finally forced a measure of recognition.

(In the antifascist German Democratic Republic – socialist East Germany – pre-Hitler science on homosexuality and transgender was partially recovered, before the counterrevolution and German reunification in 1990. Notably, East German understanding of queer lives informed the development of Cuba’s policies, leading to the revolutionary new Families Code in 2022.)

Will working-class organizations be able to relearn history’s lesson in time to fight back in defense of its most vulnerable members? Or will these extinguished lives be relegated to the first line of a new “First They Came” decades in the future?

How these questions are answered will decide the fate of the working class in the U.S. and worldwide for many years to come.

3/9: As Mass Incarceration of Immigrants Rises, Detention Centers Eye New Contracts

One attorney warns of a “humanitarian crisis” in detention centers as a jail notorious for abuse reopens to ICE.

Mike Ludwig - Truthout

Advocates breathed a sigh of relief in March 2022 when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced it would stop holding federal immigration prisoners at the Etowah County Detention Center, an isolated Alabama jail known for being one of the worst places to end up in the ICE detention system.

For years activists inside and out documented harsh and harmful conditions at Etowah, and in an internal memo, ICE said the facility had long been a “serious concern due to the quantity, severity, diversity and persistence of deficiencies.”

“I spent four years detained at Etowah, a facility that operated with no regard for human dignity, safety, or the law,” said Karim Golding, a Black Muslim activist originally from Jamaica, in a statement. “The inhumane conditions weren’t just neglect — they were deliberate.”

Now, as the Trump administration begins to make good on threats to arrest, detain and deport millions of undocumented people, the sheriff in charge of Etowah has announced the county jail will once again be holding up to 60 immigrants at a time. Reopening Etowah to ICE is part of a larger push to rapidly make space for jailing people swept up in President Donald Trump’s mass deportation plan, reversing one win of the immigrant rights movement under the Biden administration after abuse scandals, civil rights complaints, COVID-19 outbreaks, and pressure from activists and Democratic lawmakers.

“To be clear, the plan to reopen this facility is not only a reckless waste of taxpayer dollars and local resources — it is also a direct attack on our immigrant neighbors, aiming only to fuel Trump’s mass expansion of immigration detention,” said Tania Wolf, the southeast advocacy manager at National Immigration Project, in a statement last week.

Shortly after taking office in January, Trump ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to expand infrastructure for detaining and incarcerating immigrants and recent arrivals seeking asylum while authorizing ICE to make arrests in place such as schools, churches, hospitals and courthouses. The number of immigrants arrested in the interior of the country has spiked as ICE works to meet aggressive quotas set by the White House, and the number of people sitting in ICE jails has increased by more than 4,000 since Trump took office.

As of February 27, more than 43,700 people in ICE custody were being held at local jails and privately run prisons across the country, the highest level since 2019. Many of these people were removed from communities where they live, not long lines at the border with Mexico, where the number of new arrivals has plunged. The existing jails and detention centers used to incarcerate immigrants are reportedly reaching capacity. The Detention Watch Network, an immigration justice group, warned in a statement this week that the ICE detention system is plagued by “a culture of violence that results in egregiously poor conditions and even death.”

“We are living in an absolute humanitarian crisis in ICE detention centers,” said Kate Blankenship, managing partner of the human rights group Sanctuary of the South, in an interview. “There is gross abuse happening every single day, there is mass overcrowding, and the opportunity for bond and parole are quickly disappearing.”

At least three detainees have died in ICE custody since Trump took office, including two at the Krome Service and Processing Center in southern Florida. Blankenship is working with the family of one of the men, a 44-year-old Ukrainian refugee named Maksym Chernyak who died suddenly last month.

Chernyak's family said he entered ICE custody with no preexisting medical conditions. He was transferred to Krome from a local jail after being arrested in January during a domestic violence incident, although his wife says police misunderstood the situation due to language barriers. Blankenship said Chernyak requested medical help in February but didn't receive adequate care despite registering high blood pressure. Other detainees called for help days later when Chernyak suffered a seizure in the shower.

"We called the officers, and they didn't want to come until we told him that he was dead," said Greg Welch, a witness who is also in ICE custody and represented by Blankenship, in an interview to a local NBC affiliate. "He passed out. We tried to call medical. They didn't want to come because they didn't have no staff until hours later, until he was mostly unresponsive."

In a statement, ICE said Chernyak was taken to the hospital on February 18, where a brain scan revealed severe bleeding, and staff began "brain death protocol" on February 19 after attempts at stabilization failed. In the statement, ICE also said it is committed to ensuring "safe, secure, and humane environments" to people in its custody and providing "comprehensive medical care is provided from the moment individuals arrive and throughout the entirety of their stay."

Blankenship said the death of Chernyak and two other men since October 2024 at the Krome detention center is part of a much larger and well-documented pattern of medical neglect at immigration jails that will only intensify as more people are arrested and detained under Trump. A 2024 review by Physicians for Human Rights of 52 previous deaths in ICE custody over a five-year period found that nearly all were preventable.

"People hear 'overcrowding' they don't necessarily understand the depth, that it is quite literally killing people," Blankenship said.

On a recent visit to the Krome detention center, Blankenship said she saw men sleeping on bare floors in waiting rooms. Detainees pounded on windows and pleaded for help as she passed by in the hallway. Others reported being forced to sleep on buses in a parking lot without access to a shower for days, Blankenship said.

"Krome is a crisis that is happening everywhere," Blankenship said.

That crisis is set to grow as detention expansion continues. Last week, ICE signed a \$1 billion, 15-year contract with the private prison company GEO Group to reopen an empty jailhouse in Newark to incarcerate up to 1,000 immigration prisoners at a time, the first large detention expansion under Trump's crackdown.

GEO Group pushed hard for the contract and sued New Jersey in 2024 to successfully overturn a state law originally supported by racial justice activists that banned private companies from contracting with ICE to house immigrants. Now, GEO Group reportedly has plans to increase the facility's capacity to incarcerate people and potentially generate an additional \$500 to \$600 million in annual profit. The company has faced multiple lawsuits after immigrants were subjected to what attorneys describe as underpaid and forced labor. Most recently, a federal court upheld a ruling requiring GEO Group to pay \$23 million in damages after the company paid ICE detainees \$1 a day for labor at a detention center in Tacoma, Washington.

GEO Group is the largest immigration jail contractor for ICE, and private companies run a majority of immigration detention facilities across the country. A similar growth of immigration detention occurred during the first Trump administration, when 28 of 40 new contracts for detention space did not include required documentation from ICE field offices demonstrating the need for such an expansion, putting taxpayers on the hook for millions of dollars a month in unused jail space.

Other sites for incarcerating immigrants are run by local sheriffs who open their jails to ICE detainees — often in far-flung rural areas far from immigrant communities and legal support — in exchange for daily payments from ICE for each individual in custody. The Etowah County jail in Alabama is a good example.

Golding, the activist who spent time at the Etowah County jail, said he was not excited when ICE ended its contract with the facility in 2022 because U.S. citizens still had to endure the miserable conditions at the geographically isolated jail. In a statement echoing other previous ICE detainees, Golding said the inhumane conditions were not an accident and were instead implemented deliberately.

"This place consistently violated the Prison Rape Elimination Act, with security and safety nearly nonexistent," Golding said. "This was a place where quarantine protocols meant nothing during the pandemic. Officers were forced to work without protective gear. People got sick, and Etowah didn't care."

Golding said he contracted COVID-19 and became a “long-hauler” suffering from chronic symptoms while awaiting release from Etowah. He also joined the movement to shut the facility down, both for immigrants and economically impoverished locals who cycle through the jail, which is known for keeping people locked up as long as possible.

“We fought to shut this place down because we knew the truth — detention isn’t about safety or justice; it’s about cruelty, control and profit,” Golding said. “They locked people away, denied them medical care, ignored their suffering and allowed the worst kinds of violence to happen under their watch.”

3/14: Can Trump Legally Deport Mahmoud Khalil? What About Free Speech? Here’s What Experts Say

Everything you need to know about the Trump administration’s attempt to deport the Columbia student protest negotiator and what’s next.

Prem Thakker - Zeteo

The Trump administration’s communication around the arrest of Columbia University student protest negotiator, Mahmoud Khalil, a green card holder, has brought more questions than answers. Not only is it unclear what evidence, if any, the administration is using to initiate deportation proceedings, but his arrest has also spurred questions about the rights of permanent residents and whether the administration can simply go after someone based on their speech.

Here’s what legal experts say about his arrest, the Trump administration’s actions so far, and what it could mean for other immigrants:

Can a green card holder even be deported? What authority is the Trump administration using to detain Khalil and possibly deport him?

Yes, a green card holder (or lawful permanent resident) can be deported. The most common way is if they committed a crime.

But in Khalil’s case, he has not been charged with any crime. Instead, Secretary of State Marco Rubio personally signed off on targeting Khalil using a narrow, little-used authority from the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), as Zeteo previously reported.

Under the provision – section 237(a)(4)(C)(i) – an immigrant who is not a citizen or US national, but “whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable ground to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States is deportable.”

While the provision has an exception for conduct deemed “lawful” in the US (such as free speech), the exception has an exception: if the secretary of state “personally determines that the alien’s admission would compromise a compelling United States foreign policy interest.” That personal determination seems to be driving Rubio’s insistence that the Trump administration can deport legal permanent residents whom it deems to be “pro-Hamas.”

A White House official told the Free Press that “the allegation here is not that [Khalil] was breaking the law,” but rather that he is a “threat to the foreign policy and national security interests of the United States.”

It’s worth mentioning that the Jewish publication Forward called the INA a “McCarthy-era antisemitic law” that was widely viewed at the time of its passage in 1952 as a way to target “Eastern European Jewish Holocaust survivors suspected of being Soviet agents.”

What constitutes someone having “potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States”? Is it constitutional?

The INA provision is extremely vague and doesn’t define any specific metrics the secretary of state must follow in determining whether someone has potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the country.

The provision is rarely used – “that’s how powerful it is,” said Charles Kuck, an immigration attorney and adjunct professor of law at Emory University and the University of Georgia.

The Department of Homeland Security on Saturday accused Khalil of leading “activities aligned to Hamas” and said authorities detained Khalil “in support of President Trump’s executive orders prohibiting anti-Semitism.” The Trump administration has not provided any specific evidence on which it is basing its determination. Khalil’s legal team has rejected

the Trump administration's claim that Khalil supported a terrorist organization. Khalil himself emailed the university a day before his arrest, worried about his safety, saying he had been harrassed and attacked online by pro-Israel groups that had called for his deportation.

John Sandweg, former acting director for ICE, told CNN that provisions like the one the Trump administration is using to detain Khalil are typically cited if immigration authorities accuse someone of "providing direct financial or operational support to a terror organization."

He added, "It is far less common for ICE to allege that political views or speech renders a green card holder deportable under the terrorism grounds as that raises significant First Amendment concerns."

That said, immigration courts, more generally, are often given "wide discretion" in categorizing whether people are "engaging in terrorist activities," according to Karla McKanders, the director of the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund's Thurgood Marshall Institute.

Because the INA provision is so rarely used, it's hardly been tested in federal court.

It's worth noting, however, that a district court in 1996 did find that the provision was "unconstitutionally vague," said Lindsay Nash, an associate professor at Cardozo School of Law and co-director of the Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic.

According to Nash, the judge, who was none other than Donald Trump's sister, Maryanne Trump Barry, essentially said that "providing the secretary of state [the ability] to determine deportability" deprives the court of the role it would "normally have in reviewing these types of determinations." The law, the court said, also doesn't give non-citizens a way to know what is prohibited, and it violated procedural due process because "it provides no opportunity to be heard on the charges against you before you're determined to be deportable," Nash told Zeteo. Ultimately, the court found the provision was an "unconstitutional delegation of legislative power to the executive."

However, that ruling was thrown out by an appeals court, which did not comment on the constitutionality of the provision but rather said the district court did not have jurisdiction in the case.

In 1999, the Board of Immigration Appeals, which did not address the constitutionality issues, said that under the INA provision, the letter from the secretary of state "conveying the Secretary's determination that an alien's presence in this country would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States, and stating facially reasonable and bona fide reasons for that determination, is presumptive and sufficient evidence that the alien is deportable."

What about the First Amendment?

Courts have previously found that green card holders, who are lawful permanent residents, are protected by the Constitution, including First Amendment rights. "Technically, the text of the First Amendment does not distinguish between citizens and non-citizens – so all persons in the US should be entitled to First Amendment protections," McKanders told Zeteo.

While Kuck said it's unlikely an immigration judge would go against Rubio's determination, Khalil likely has a strong case in federal court.

"It seems to me constitutionally suspect to simply be able to deport someone who is protected by every right of the US constitution without due process," Kuck said. "I do not believe that when Congress created that provision, it was thinking about a student protesting at a college, and how that could possibly impact the actual foreign policy of the United States. And I think that's a determination that is absolutely subject to judicial review," he added. "I think the First Amendment absolutely trumps the Immigration Nationality Act."

For his part, Rubio has said that "this is not about free speech. This is about people that don't have a right to be in the United States to begin with."

Yet, when asked about Khalil's case on Wednesday, Trump border czar Tom Homan said that there are "limits" to free speech.

What happens next in Khalil's case?

For now, Khalil remains detained in an ICE facility in Louisiana. A federal judge in New York has ordered the government not to deport Khalil while a challenge to his detention is pending. Khalil's legal team has asked for their client to be moved to New York and released. The government has argued the case should be moved to New Jersey or Louisiana.

Separately, Khalil is scheduled to appear before an immigration judge in Louisiana on March 27.

What could Khalil's case mean for other green card holders or legal permanent residents? Or those with student visas?

Trump has said there are more arrests to come, and sources within the government told Zeteo there are "multiple targets" beyond Khalil who the administration plans to use the provision to deport. If the Trump administration successfully deports Khalil under the INA provision it is using, legal experts expect the government will continue to target immigrants over their speech.

"The Trump administration's message is clear that it will abuse the law in its racist targeting of immigrant Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims, and others," said Laila Ayub, immigration attorney and director of Project ANAR, an Afghan community immigration justice organization.

Sophie Dalsimer, an immigration attorney and co-director of Health Justice at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, added: "The arrest and detention of Mahmoud Khalil represents an extremely disturbing weaponizing of federal law enforcement to punish and silence free speech."

But she warned that while it may be easier for the Trump administration "to target visa holders, and then [lawful permanent residents], ... it is not likely to stop there."

McKanders agreed. "The topline is that this appears to be a retaliatory deportation for exercising First Amendment rights," she said.

"The impact expands broader than one case. It is the chilling effect this executive action will have on curtailing both citizen and noncitizens speech as both groups will be afraid that their actions, although protected under the First Amendment, will be criminalized."

4/12: LA's Community Self-Defense fights ICE fascism

John Parker – Struggle-La Lucha

Los Angeles — There is an urgent need to build principled unity to confront the rising threat of fascism, a threat that spreads relentlessly like a virus, intensifying attacks on Black, Brown, and working-class communities at record levels.

While figures like Donald Trump and Elon Musk may be the loudest voices advancing this agenda, the Democratic Party under Joe Biden and Kamala Harris were complicit — funding and supporting Israeli genocide and deportations at home as tools of political control.

Barack Obama, despite his progressive reputation, oversaw more than 3 million formal deportations during his presidency — the highest number under any administration. That brutal legacy of "formal removals," in which individuals are forcibly expelled from the U.S. under court order, set the stage. Biden and Harris continued down this path, even as they publicly claimed to support immigrant rights and racial justice.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has likewise failed to live up to her rhetoric. Despite claims of prioritizing safety, she has remained silent on the LAPD's long-standing cooperation with ICE, which continues to terrorize immigrant and migrant communities. The label "sanctuary city" becomes a cruel oxymoron when families are ripped apart in churches, schools, or their homes, while city leaders look the other way.

This hypocrisy has not gone unnoticed. The growing anger and disillusionment across the country is fueling the rise of grassroots resistance — nowhere more powerfully than in Los Angeles County, where the Community for Self-Defense Coalition (CSDC) is taking bold steps to protect vulnerable communities.

Community Self-Defense in action

Formed in February, the CSDC is already a force to be reckoned with. Over 60 organizations have joined this coalition, with the Steering Committee comprising Unión Del Barrio (which initiated the project), People's Struggle – San Fernando Valley, the Association of Raza Educators, Santee MEChA, Centro CSO, Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, and the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice.

The coalition's central mission is to inform the public of their rights during ICE raids, conduct community patrols, and disrupt deportation operations through rapid response. Their outreach includes flyers, door-to-door engagement, and workplace visits, empowering residents to demand that agents produce signed warrants before entering homes or places of business.

These actions have made a difference. On Feb. 23, in the city of Alhambra in Los Angeles County, 12 ICE vehicles were forced to leave empty-handed after community defense patrols showed up. In another instance, as Ron Gochez of Unión Del Barrio described it to the LA Times, multiple LAPD vehicles were seen alongside federal agents during a raid in South Central. Using a megaphone, Gochez warned residents not to engage, not to open doors, and not to sign anything.

Such patrols are a form of organized resistance, not just against ICE but against the systemic violence carried out by both Democratic and Republican administrations. The U.S. is home to over 50 million immigrants, most of whom are workers contributing significantly to the economy. And yet, they are repaid with fear, detention, dehumanization and deportation — sometimes in countries they've never lived in.

A recent "60 Minutes" report on the torture of deported immigrants highlighted just how far this system has rotted. While Trump intensified the cruelty, the roots go much deeper. California politicians like Gavin Newsom and Karen Bass have prioritized police budgets over housing, health care, and community safety. LAPD funding now tops \$1 billion, even as the death toll from police violence continues to climb — disproportionately affecting Black and Brown residents.

Naming the violence: this is genocide

What we are witnessing must be named for what it is: genocide. According to the United Nations Convention on Genocide, the term includes not only mass killings, but also actions intended to cause serious harm, impose life-threatening conditions, and destroy families and cultures. By these standards, the U.S. government's actions — at home and abroad — meet the definition.

This is not a new argument. On Dec. 17, 1951, legendary figures Paul Robeson and William Patterson submitted a historic petition to the United Nations: "We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People." Nearly a century later, the conditions they described persist and in many ways have worsened.

Police killings of Black and Brown youth continue to break records annually. Immigrant children are separated from their families, deported, or left to languish in detention centers. In Gaza, over 100 children are now killed by U.S.-supplied weapons every day in a genocidal war enabled by U.S. foreign policy. The silence of mainstream politicians and media is deafening — and damning.

The legacy of self-defense

In the face of such violence, the right to self-defense becomes not just moral but essential. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, inspired by Malcolm X and rooted in the struggles of oppressed peoples worldwide, offers a historic model.

On the Black Panther Party:

"The practices of the late Malcolm X were deeply rooted in the theoretical foundations of the Black Panther Party. Malcolm had represented both a militant revolutionary, with the dignity and self-respect to stand up and fight to win equality for all oppressed minorities; while also being an outstanding role model, someone who sought to bring about positive social services; something the Black Panthers would take to new heights. The Panthers followed Malcolm's belief of international working class unity across the spectrum of color and gender ... From the tenets of Maoism they set the role of their Party as the vanguard of the revolution and worked to establish a united front, while from Marxism they addressed the capitalist economic system, embraced the theory of dialectical materialism, and represented the need for all workers to forcefully take over the means of production."

Their 10-point program of Panthers remains deeply relevant today — especially these demands:

Point 5: We Want Education for Our People That Exposes the True Nature of This Decadent American Society. Education must teach true history, not sanitized narratives. Ethnic studies are under attack for a reason — they awaken resistance.

Point 6: We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service.

We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military by whatever means necessary.

The Trump Administration and the Democratic Party would like to fall in line with U.S. wars and proxy wars. Imperialist wars rob us of basic social services and push austerity and the killing of our international community, even those that share our ethnicity. Self-defense means protecting our international multi-national community.

Point 7: We Want An Immediate End to Police Brutality and the Murder of Black People.

We believe we can end police brutality in our Black community by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.

Last Monday, the Supreme Court greenlit the Trump administration's plan to resume mass deportations of Venezuelan migrants, using 1798-era war powers. In dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor warned that the decision allows for people to be "taken off the streets, forced onto planes and confined to foreign prisons with no opportunity for redress."

This is the legal foundation of fascism — and it is here.

We may not yet be ready to meet this threat with armed resistance. But we can begin by building movements strong enough to dismantle the institutions that enable it. We must continue organizing for police to be disarmed and replaced.

Right now the Community Self-Defense Coalition is the primary opponent of fascism here in Los Angeles. On May 1, it will take to the streets again, with even more strength, in defiance of state terror and in defense of the people.

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NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
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