# Dozens arrested in Arizona demonstrations against anti-immigrant law

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At least 50 people were arrested as hundreds of people demonstrated in downtown Phoenix, Arizona against the anti-immigrant SB 1070 law and vicious tactics of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

A day earlier, federal district judge Susan Bolton issued an injunction against four major parts of the law. (See "Judge blocks main provisions of Arizona anti-immigrant law").

Thursday's demonstrations coincided with the implementation of the remaining pieces of SB 1070.

The majority of the day's demonstrations occurred along Washington Street, which leads directly from the Arizona capitol building to Maricopa County Sheriff headquarters just over a mile and half away.

Phoenix police and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office organized a massive, quasi-military operation to confront the peaceful protesters, featuring hundreds of policemen in riot gear and SWAT teams. Phoenix police used a bank of video screens with live feeds of the "hot spots" to keep surveillance on the protesters throughout the day.

The day before, Arpaio issued a warning against the demonstrations that hinted at the scale of the police operation. "[Those] who wish to target this community and this Sheriff by attempting to disrupt our jail and patrol operations will be unsuccessful as we will be fully prepared to meet those challenges head on with appropriately staffed personnel and resources," Arpaio said.

Paul Knost of Examiner.com described the scene: "The first thing that struck me as I walked around was the shear number of police personnel dressed in menacing riot gear complete with body armor, helmets, and face shields. Everywhere I looked, I saw more police than demonstrators."

The biggest confrontation between police and demonstrators came at the Maricopa County jail on Fourth Avenue and Washington Street. Demonstrators attempted to block access to the jail and at least six chained themselves to the building. Police cut their chains and dragged them into the jails. An estimated 23 people were arrested there, along with two journalists who were also detained.

In another instance, nearly two dozen people were arrested in front of Phoenix city hall on Washington Street after linking their arms and sitting in the road, blocking traffic.

Later in the day an estimated 200 people gathered around a flatbed truck parked near Madison Street. Speakers were set up on the truck and music played. Police allowed the demonstration for a while, but eventually ordered people to disperse or risk arrest.

In Tucson, Arizona, 13 people were arrested from a demonstration of several hundred, allegedly for failure to disperse and for blocking streets. Police there reacted with a show of force as well, wearing riot gear and wielding batons.

Protesters in Tucson briefly stopped traffic along Interstate 19 by throwing a number of tires linked together with rope, glass and signs out of the back of trucks.

A number of demonstrations were held across the US against SB 1070 in Arizona and reactionary immigration policies in other states. In Utah, where legislators have begun steps to introduce a bill similar to SB 1070, hundreds protested. In Los Angeles, at least 200 demonstrated. At one point demonstrators chained themselves together and lay across Wilshire Boulevard, blocking traffic. Demonstrations were also held in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Cruz in California, and Des Moines, Iowa, as well as other locations.

In spite of declarations of victory from some demonstration organizers, the partial repeal of SB 1070 means little for immigrant workers, who continue to suffer police repression and enormous exploitation in their jobs. Both Democrats and Republicans, meanwhile, continue to push forward their own right-wing immigration "reform" proposals.

Proponents of the Arizona law view the partial repeal as a temporary setback. In a statement released after the injunction, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer promised to appeal the decision. "This fight is far from over," she wrote. "In fact, it is just the beginning, and at the end of what is certain to be a long legal struggle, Arizona will prevail in its right to protect our citizens."

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Brewer's office has already filed an appeal to Bolton's ruling. The district court of appeals could hear the case by mid-August, and many believe it will eventually work its way up to the Supreme Court. Brewer has already floated the possibility of "tweaking" the law in the state legislature.

On the other hand, SB 1070's co-sponsor, State Senator Russell Pearce, downplayed the significance of the ruling. Pearce told Fox News that remaining parts of the bill "still [have] a lot of teeth." He praised the law's restrictions on the activities of day laborers and against "sanctuary city" policies in Arizona.

Immediately after the partial repeal, Arpaio announced that he would not alter in any way his harsh and brutal tactics. "It's business as usual for this Sheriff's office," he said. "All of the protesters coming here from everywhere and the local critics aren't going to change the way Arizona or this Sheriff will fight our illegal immigration policy."

As an act of defiance against the judge's ruling, Arpaio also announced that he would carry out his 17th "crime suppression sweep"—the name he gives to the canvassing of Hispanic neighborhoods by Sheriff's deputies and his "posse"—on Thursday. Arpaio's previous sweeps have netted hundreds of arrests, but records show the majority of those were made for minor offenses.

Another Arizona Sheriff, Paul Babeu of Pinal County, has also begun to ratchet up anti-immigrant hysteria. Babeu recently appeared on white supremacist radio talk show called "The Political Cesspool," and claimed that an "invasion into Arizona" is taking place. Babeu appeared on another controversial show hosted by libertarian Alex Jones and claimed that President Obama's opposition to the Arizona law "borders on" treason.

The two sheriffs, along with a number of right-wing politicians and media figures across the US, seek to confuse and channel the economic distress of native workers by pitting them against immigrants. In fact, the enemy of both native and immigrant workers is the US financial elite, which is forcing brutal austerity policies on hundreds of millions in order to pay for its looting of the federal government.

An ultra-right-wing element—a tiny minority of the US population—has been whipped up into a violent frenzy by the anti-immigrant campaign of the media and politicians. The latest incident occurred on Thursday morning, when staff members of Arizona Congressman Raul Grijalva reported finding a shattered window and a bullet inside his Yuma district office. Grijalva, a Democrat, posed as an opponent of SB 1070 and called for a boycott of the state in response to the law.

There can be no illusions, however, that the Democratic Party or the groups that back it can be used to defend immigrants' rights. The move toward far-right police-state methods in dealing with immigrants is, in fact, a policy shared by the Democratic Party.

Many Arizona Democrats, like Congressman Harry Mitchell, publicly denounced the suing of the state by the Justice Department. In a letter to Obama, Mitchell wrote that the administration's "time, efforts and resources would be much better spent securing the border and fixing our broken immigration system." Similar rhetoric was also heard from Arizona Democrats Gabrielle Giffords and Ann Kirkpatrick.

Even in opposition to SB 1070, Democrats like Grivalja and Obama sympathize with the "understandable frustration" over immigration. Their alternatives to draconian laws like SB 1070 are calls for "comprehensive immigration reform," including policies that would be just as reactionary.

From the time it was enacted the racist Arizona legislation was seized on by the Obama administration and Democrats to promote their own immigration "reform," a plan that will most likely include a requirement for biometric Social Security cards and demands that illegal immigrants confess to committing a crime prior to going to "the end of the line" in a guest worker-type job program.

In this regard it is telling that the Obama administration filed suit against the Arizona law not because it violated basic civil rights, but because it was a state law preempting federal jurisdiction over immigration policy.

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