Hundreds arrested in California anti-immigrant sweep

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More than 240 immigrants were taken into custody by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement over a four-day period last week. ICE officials are calling it the most successful operation of its kind in the Southern California region. The agency's National Fugitive Operations, tasked with the mission to "reduce the fugitive alien population in the United States," led the sweep.

According to ICE officials, more than half of the people arrested had felony convictions, while the rest had multiple misdemeanor convictions. Among those taken into custody, 191 were from Mexico and the rest were from 21 other countries.

After the sweep, ICE spokeswoman Virginia Kice demanded tighter state and local anti-immigration efforts to help expedite deportations: "One of the challenges we're facing is because of state law and local policies, more individuals who are potentially deportable with significant criminal histories are being released on the street instead of being turned over to ICE."

The ICE official expressed frustration with a few recent setbacks to the ability of the agency to carry out its work without restraints, namely the curbing of a process known as "detainer," or "immigration hold." Last year, an Oregon judge declared illegal the practice of a local jail or any law enforcement agency detaining an individual longer than their expected release date to provide ICE agents extra time to take the individual into federal custody for deportation. A recent California state law has had the same effect.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, "ICE's use of detainers to imprison people without due process and, in many cases, without any charges pending or probable cause of any violation has raised serious constitutional concerns."

David Marin, the deputy field officer for the immigration agency's Enforcement and Removal Operations in Southern California, also defended the sweep. "By doing these operations periodically, we show everyone what we can do to make the community safer," he claimed. "Because local law enforcement haven't been able to cooperate with us like they used to, they have been releasing criminal aliens in the community, and we have to spend a lot of resources to be able to find them."

The Obama administration has pursued a vicious anti-immigrant policy characterized by an unprecedented number of deportations as well as the continued militarization of borders. Last year the US deported a record 438,421 people. Republican candidates in the 2016 presidential election are calling for even tougher immigration policies, with many supporting the repeal of birthright citizenship, an unprecedented attack on constitutional rights.

Hostility toward immigrants is a thoroughly bipartisan affair, with California's Democratic Governor Jerry Brown in full support of the crackdown.

The "successful sweep" highlights the repressive nature of immigration policy in the US and in particular in California, a state that has been hailed by the media as a bulwark of immigrant rights. The *Los Angeles Times* went as far as to describe California as a very generous state when it comes to immigrants, calling immigration policy here "California citizenship."

"California citizenship" is a smokescreen of purportedly "progressive" immigration measures, deliberately aimed at promoting support for California Democrats from Latino voters. All of the proposed measures require undocumented immigrants to come forward and reveal their identities and addresses. "State-level citizenship" has no effect on the federal denial of

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disability or Social Security benefits or unemployment benefits, as well as bank loans and other private transactions that require a Social Security number.

While both parties support draconian measures such as mass deportation, a Gallup poll released last month showed that 65% of Americans favor a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. For over eight years, despite hysterical anti-immigrant propaganda and mass deportations, the majority of Americans have favored such a policy.

Immigrants everywhere are met with the most repressive and brutal methods by the ruling class, while they receive support from a substantial section of the working class. The European capitalist states are constructing a high-tech fence guarded by an army of police officers, while establishing registration centers where refugees from Syria and other war-torn countries that are the product of a criminal policy of aggressive wars and regime change are detained until they can be deported. Broad sections of working people, in sharp contrast, met the most recent wave of refugees with an outpouring of sympathy and solidarity.

The SEP stands in solidarity with all immigrants and refugees and is determined to fight against repressive policies such as the recent ICE sweep. As the resolution adopted last year by US SEP's Third National Congress declared: "The SEP upholds the right of workers from every corner of the globe to live and work in whatever country they choose with full citizenship rights, including the right to return to their home countries without the threat of being barred from re-entry to the US and being separated from their families. The SEP fights for the repeal of all anti-immigrant laws and the disbanding of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Border Patrol."

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