

“If any layer of society is not safe, then no one is safe”

Protesters denounce Trump’s anti-immigrant order

Our reporters
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Protests swept across the US this weekend after President Donald Trump issued an executive order targeting immigrants and refugees.

Thousands gathered outside of airport terminals in New York City, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and other major cities to oppose the measures after reports of individuals, families and even small children being detained en route from the seven majority-Muslim countries named in the executive order.

The protests express the growing hostility to the increasingly dictatorial measures of the new administration. Many attending the protests carried handmade signs, indicating the spontaneous character of the demonstrations.

On Sunday, several thousand gathered outside of the White House to denounce the Trump administration, calling for the recently inaugurated president to leave office immediately. Hundreds gathered outside of both Dulles and Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airports, both in the Washington DC area, on Saturday and Sunday. Nearly 4,000 marched at Atlanta International Airport on Sunday.

At Los Angeles International Airport, protesters on Sunday numbered in the thousands. In Chicago, nearly 1,000 protesters gathered at O’Hare International Airport.

The WSWs spoke to those attending several of the demonstrations.

San Diego, California

Over one thousand people attended a protest at the San Diego airport on Sunday, many carrying handmade signs.

Jackie, a San Diego resident, said, “The entire thing [Trump administration] is symptomatic of authoritarianism. In a globalized world, no country can stand to isolate itself in anyway. We have global problems so we need to be working across borders to solve them.”

WSWS reporters asked what Jackie thought was the root cause of the refugee crisis. She answered that people are often fleeing war-torn countries, adding, “Which are a product of our wars and our guns. We need to remember that if any layer of society is not safe than no one is safe”

On the Democratic Party, Jackie said, “It pains me that the criticism of the Obama administration is so true, but it is. He disappointed us on so many issues, militarism, expanding drone operations, immigration.

And the other thing is the precedent set by Obama, like the executive orders he issued, really paved the way for Trump to be able to do what he did.”

Hannah, a University of California, San Diego graduate student, said she considers herself a socialist. “What is going on is not only fundamentally unconstitutional, it defies our humanity.

“I am a socialist, and I also think we need to get rid of national boundaries. The growing nationalism not just here but everywhere I think is deplorable and not good for anybody.”

“I personally am not a fan of the Democratic Party. They have a tendency to try and compromise, which is a fine thing to do if both sides have something good to say, but of course neither does.”

Cher, who has Iranian family and whose husband works in Mexico, said that her 79-year-old aunt was detained in an airport for over six hours when arriving back from Iran. “She has been coming back and forth for 20 to 30 years. We were outraged, but mostly worried about her health.

“Honestly, I think the US has gotten involved in wars over there [the Middle East] which it shouldn’t be in, and that it is those actions which are really the cause of terrorism.

“I don’t hate Obama, but I do think that he really opened the door many times for what is now happening.”

Nazarian said she came to the protest because “I am realizing that the acts of Trump are completely outrageous. When it comes to the wall, I mean it just isn’t going to solve anything. We have our military all over the world, we don’t need to build it up on the border.”

Ally added, “The problem is that we already have a wall, and one that is heavily guarded, what we need is not to build up but to tear down.”

Jessica, a middle school history teacher, said she was at the protest “to support my refugee neighbors and refugee students and my students’ parents who are refugees.” Jessica described Trump as “incompetent,” and “a puppet for what used to be a fringe element of society in the United States.”

Jahleh, a graduate student at San Diego State University, attended the protest in part because of the effect of Trump’s executive orders on her father, a legal resident from Iran. Jahleh said that the American government bears a great political responsibility for the current crisis affecting refugees worldwide. She said that animosity toward Muslims that has long been promoted in ruling circles has now “come to a boiling point,” expressed hostility toward the political establishment as a whole and said that now “people have to take action,” pointing to

the crowd.

Jahleh added that the wars waged by American imperialism around the globe “only benefit the ruling class. Workers are victims of the wars and are sent to die fighting.” She added, “Growing up, in high school, socialism was always presented as something to fear, but things are changing now. Young people are realizing that capitalism isn’t working.”

Following a discussion about the nature of the Sanders campaign, which she supported, Jahleh conceded that he “is still part of the system and is working within it.”

New York City

Hundreds gathered at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn in front of the Brooklyn Federal courthouse where a federal judge was deciding the fate of the refugees. They chanted, “No ban, no wall/Liberty for one and all,” and “Put a fence around Mike Pence.” Scores of officers of the New York Police Department were mobilized, many of them in riot gear.

Cynthia from Brooklyn explained, “When I heard what was happening to the refugees I had to come down to protest. I’m against Trump’s promotion of hate and fear, everything he stands for. He appeals to people’s fears, particularly related to terrorism. He takes a very small number of people and uses them to stereotype the entire group.

“If we allow this to happen he’ll single out other groups like African Americans,” she continued. “There are people in every group that do bad things. We can’t allow him to incite hate.

“I don’t know how we got here. I’m still trying to wake up from this nightmare. But we have to unite.”

Matthew told the WSWS that prior to Trump’s victory he had never protested in his life. He attempted to join the protests at JFK airport, but after officials restricted access to ticketed passengers only, he made his way to the downtown Brooklyn courthouse.

“This is now my fourth protest since the election. People have to fight. You’re all in or you’re all out at this point,” he said. “Trump has been in office 7 days. This is only the beginning. After the election people tried to normalize it. But Trump made it clear what his position was during the campaign. We have to do everything we can to stop him. We have to stay active.”

Asked about the prospects for the Democratic Party to resist Trump, Matthew responded, “It’s the people who are going to stop it, not the Democrats. It’s beyond political parties at this point.”

Valerrie explained her fears of the new Trump administration. “People have called Trump a lot of things: a narcissist, a buffoon... I’m calling him Hitler’s reincarnation. I think we’re talking civil war, global war. That’s where we’re headed.

“My mother grew up in the Jim Crow south,” she added. “There is no way we’re going back to those days. I won’t have it.”

Asked about the role of the Democrats, Jen said, “Look at the confirmation hearings. [Senate Minority Leader] Chuck Schumer is letting Trump’s nominees sail through. The same with Cory Booker. We have to get the corporate Democrats out. The days are over where you can just say that the Democrats are better than the Republicans. They need to go.”

Hamtramck, Michigan

About 800 workers and young people rallied in front of city Hall in the Detroit enclave of Hamtramck on Sunday. The city is home to a large immigrant population, including large numbers of workers from Eastern Europe as well as the Middle East. Supporters of immigrant rights attended from throughout the Metro Detroit area.

Jessica, a high school teacher in the Hamtramck public schools, said, “I am here to support my neighbors and students. I have students who are from 15 different countries. I have students whose parents are overseas; a lot of split families. Hamtramck is an immigrant community. Our superintendent of public schools said we are going to be a sanctuary school.”

Speaking of Trump’s announcement banning immigration from predominantly Muslim countries she said, “It is unbelievable. I thought before the election, there is no way. It is hard to believe any of these policies have a large following.

“In the past, I have not considered myself a political person. But now I can’t not follow it. This is only the first week. Any attempt to address the war on terror is out the window. Trump is adding fuel to the fire. He reinforces the belief that Muslims are not welcome, even if they are American citizens.”

Matthew, a retired Hamtramck teacher, said, “I want people to know that this is not how our country is supposed to be. The Constitution is a document; it is not a poem to be interpreted. It is the law of the land.”

Asked what he thought had led to the installation of Trump he said, “The two-party system is controlled by big money. In the last election, they put up the two worst possible choices we ever had. A series of tragic events has now led to this.”

Bryan, a heavy equipment operator from suburban Detroit, said that he was a libertarian, but opposed Trump’s policies. “I want to stand and let immigrants know that they are welcome. We bomb their countries for 10 years and then say they are not welcome. That’s BS. I believe in liberty for everyone. It is as much Obama’s fault as it is Bush’s.”



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