

Trump's Homeland Security memos: Millions at risk of deportation as crackdown looms

Eric London
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The Trump administration is set to give final approval to two leaked memos signed by Department of Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, according to multiple press reports. The basic content of the memos will be largely unchanged from the versions made public over the weekend. An official announcement adopting the memos is expected this week.

The full implementation of these protocols would fundamentally alter the demographic makeup of the United States and would result in one of the largest forced migrations in world history. The new DHS protocols place millions of migrants at risk of removal and threaten to upend the lives of millions more family members and friends.

A Texas immigration lawyer who wished to remain anonymous for fear the government would punish her clients told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “The highlights of the memo have shaken the core of those we serve as fear has seeped in, leaving them doubtful of the immediate future.”

The total number of migrants who can be arrested, detained and deported immediately without a court hearing is likely in the hundreds of thousands, as the memos expand the “expedited removal” process to include migrants located anywhere in the US who cannot prove two years of residence. Previously, only migrants captured within 100 miles of the border and within 14 days of their entry could be removed without appearing before a judge.

The memos prioritize the removal of migrants with criminal records, as well as those who have been *charged* with a criminal offense; those who have “abused any program related to receipt of public benefits” or those who “in the judgment of an immigration officer otherwise pose a risk to public safety or national security.”

Though it remains to be seen exactly how officials will implement these sweeping and vaguely worded protocols, the *Los Angeles Times* estimated that 6 million migrants entered without documentation or inspection and technically fall under the new priority standard. In addition, parents who pay to help their children join them in the US will now be deported or criminally prosecuted on the absurd ground that they are aiding “human trafficking.”

The deportation of even a significant fraction of those affected will require a massive police presence in major American cities. The new DHS protocols will deputize tens of thousands of local police to stop immigrants with “reasonable suspicion” that they are an undocumented worker. This will result in mass racial profiling of Latinos, Africans, Asians and others, not limited to US border regions.

The memos call for the hiring of 10,000 immigration agents and 5,000 border patrolmen, who will fill the courts and detention centers with immigrants, in many cases tearing them away from their children, parents or other loved ones. These officials, local police, the National Guard and perhaps other branches of the military will be mobilized to crush resistance to deportation in heavily migrant neighborhoods and among sympathetic demonstrators.

Conditions at the border will become extremely harsh. All migrants captured crossing the border will now be placed in detention centers either before they are removed without trial or as they await their potentially years-long legal process to conclude. These facilities will become increasingly crowded and conditions will worsen. Deaths in detention facilities are already common as guards withhold medicine and otherwise deny migrants’ medical care.

“The Rio Grande Valley is one of the most highly

policed areas of the country,” said John-Michael Torres of La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) in an interview with the WWS. LUPE is an immigrant rights group based along the Texas-Mexico border. “Border communities are similar to the rest of the country: we are made up of diverse, tight-knit communities from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, with people who are proud of where they live...We don’t want our communities to be divided by border walls and our families divided by deportations.”

Under the DHS memos, asylum seekers will now have to prove they have a “significant possibility” of satisfying the complex legal requirements for asylum to avoid expedited removal, whereas before they only needed to show they had a “credible fear” of returning to their home country to win a hearing before a judge.

This will be difficult for migrants to do, especially without a lawyer present. ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials regularly block attorneys from contacting their clients in prison, trick migrants into signing incriminating documents with the false promise of release and write reports including false testimony that ruin a migrant’s asylum case. To make matters worse, the memos also call for sending asylum seekers back to the country from which they entered the US (almost always Mexico) while they wait for their case to conclude. This will result in an abrogation of their basic due process rights, which attach to non-citizens only when they are on US soil, as evidenced by the memos’ requirement that migrants participate in any court hearings by teleconference only.

The order calls for the construction of a new militarized infrastructure of walls and jails that will house new entrants and those waiting to be deported. The language of the memo signed by Kelly calls for ICE and CBP to “take all necessary action and allocate all available resources to expand their detention capabilities and capacities at or near the border with Mexico to the greatest extent possible.”

The orders also severely restrict both prosecutors’ ability to halt removal proceedings based on their discretion and the government’s ability to temporarily allow immigrants to exit and re-enter the US for humanitarian reasons, like to visit a dying parent in Mexico.

Millions of migrants in the US are making urgent plans for the possibility of deportation as fear grows of

additional round-ups. Last week, the Trump administration arrested 680 migrants, including a student with valid DACA paperwork, and many without criminal records.

Families across the country are now scrambling to organize their paperwork and to make arrangements to place their citizen children in the care of friends or family. Immigrants are flooding the consulates of their home countries with calls for help. Rumors of ICE raids spread rapidly across social media even when unfounded, giving a sense of the level of fear and desperation. Teachers in immigrant-heavy neighborhoods report high levels of fear and anxiety among young children, many of whom are US citizens, who worry that the government will take their parents away.

The defense of the millions of migrants facing deportation in the US and of the millions more seeking refuge in Europe requires mobilizing the working class internationally. This must take place on the basis of a socialist, anti-war and anti-capitalist program.

The conditions that give rise to migration—war and poverty—and the harsh conditions migrants face in the US and Europe are both the product of the capitalist system and cannot be solved by appeals to capitalist politicians. Only by reorganizing the world economy on a socialist and egalitarian basis can the right to travel freely across the world without fear of detention or deportation be secured for all.



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