

Trump administration escalates campaign of fear and terror against immigrants

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6 March 2017

Another week of the Trump administration's campaign against undocumented immigrants has brought another round of atrocious cases in which longstanding US residents have been snatched from their families and either jailed or deported.

The litany of horrors has been almost entirely ignored by the national media and the Democratic Party, which is focused on a ferocious battle within the state over foreign policy. It is not the administration's brutal crackdown on immigrant workers that is the subject of criticism from within the political establishment, but Trump's ties to Russia.

On Tuesday, Romulo Avelica-Gonzalez was seized by Immigration and Customs Enforcement after dropping his daughter off at school in Los Angeles. Two carloads of ICE agents stopped the car that the 48-year-old Avelica was driving and arrested him in front of his wife and 13-year-old daughter. The father of four US citizen children, Avelica has lived in southern California since he was 21 and has worked steadily throughout that time, 60 and 70 hours a week, in local restaurants.

In a blatant act of political reprisal, 22-year-old Daniela Vargas was detained by ICE agents in Jackson, Mississippi, after she left a press conference where she protested the detention of her father and brother on February 15. The Vargas family came to the United States from Argentina in 2001, when Daniela was only seven years old. As a child arrival, Daniela was given temporary exemption from deportation under the DACA program, but her exemption lapsed while she was trying to raise the \$495 fee to extend it. Her attorney said that she was in an ICE detention facility in Louisiana and would be processed as a visa waiver overstay and deported to Argentina without a hearing.

On Thursday, Juan Carlos Fomperosa Garcia went to

the ICE office in Phoenix, Arizona, keeping an appointment to discuss his request for asylum. He has lived in the US for 20 years and is the single father of three US citizen children. An hour later, ICE agents dropped off a bag with a few of his belongings at his home, handing it to his 23-year-old daughter Yennifer Sanchez. On Friday morning, Fomperosa Garcia called his children to let them know he had been deported to Mexico, leaving Sanchez as the sole guardian of her 17-year-old brother and 14-year-old sister.

There are many more stories like these, most of which are not even covered in the local media.

An atmosphere of fear and terror is gripping immigrant communities throughout the country. The cruelty of these measures is not an accident or an excess, but a deliberate and intentional feature of the anti-immigrant pogrom unleashed by President Trump's executive orders on January 25. White House aides said the purpose of the orders was to "unshackle" immigration agents—in other words, to free them from any restraints in the treatment of the thousands that are or will be rounded up.

This reality is underscored by a report by Reuters that the Department of Homeland Security, which includes both ICE and the Border Protection Service, is considering a proposal for the systematic separation of women and children detained while crossing the border together illegally. DHS officials reportedly briefed asylum officers on the plan, whose purpose, they said, was to "deter mothers from migrating to the United States with their children."

The new policy would allow federal agents to keep mothers imprisoned indefinitely, while their children would be turned over to the protective custody of the Department of Health and Human Services, which would place them in the "least restrictive setting" it

could provide, including a state-sponsored guardian. Whether and how the mothers would be reunited with their children, during or after deportation, remains unclear.

The order would have two main purposes: to lessen the impact of a court order issued last July that barred prolonged detention of children, which has forced ICE to release most mothers with children from detention centers; and to intimidate future refugees from Central America, where most of the families come from. The word will be spread to those countries that mothers coming to the United States will lose the children they are trying to protect.

While Trump has greatly escalated the attack on immigrants, he is building on the monstrous apparatus of repression developed by the Bush and Obama administrations, particularly the latter.

The continuity in the mistreatment of immigrants is demonstrated in the lawsuit filed against a major prison contractor for ICE, GEO Group, based in the Denver suburb of Aurora, Colorado. The suit charges that tens of thousands were forced to work for \$1 a day or for nothing at all, in violation of federal antislavery laws. The forced labor, involving food service, cleaning and maintenance at the facility, allowed GEO to run the prison with only a single janitor, pocketing huge profits. In many instances, the suit alleges, immigrants were compelled to “volunteer” for work details with the threat of being placed in solitary confinement if they refused.

The federal government has set up what amounts to mass internment camps. It spends more on ICE and the Border Patrol than on all other federal law enforcement agencies combined: more than \$19 billion a year. The number detained by the immigration authorities, more than 400,000 a year, is greater than the total number of inmates held by the Federal Bureau of Prisons for all federal crimes. Trump proposes to add another 10,000 ICE officers and 5,000 Border Patrol agents to what is already a small army.

The police state methods inflicted on immigrant workers are a dress rehearsal for what the Trump administration and the US ruling elite, Democrats and Republicans, have in store for the working class as a whole. The brutal treatment of immigrants is a preparation for deploying the vast machinery of state repression against coming struggles by workers, both

native-born and immigrant, in defense of their jobs, living standards and democratic rights.

The working class in the United States must oppose the anti-immigrant rampage of the Trump administration—aided and abetted by the Democratic Party—and uphold the right of workers from every corner of the globe to live and work in the country of their choice with full citizenship rights and without fear of detention, deportation or repression.



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