Immigration raids strike Detroit: Dozens rounded up for deportation to Iraq war zone

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In a series of raids Sunday, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested as many as 100 Iraqi immigrants in the Detroit metro area, including Muslims and many Chaldean Catholics, some of whom were reportedly captured while leaving church services.

Family members of the arrestees told the *World Socialist Web Site* that the detainees were sent to a for-profit prison four hours away near Youngstown, Ohio, from where they face immediate risk of deportation to Iraq.

Protesters held a demonstration at the Mother of God Catholic Church in Southfield yesterday, where friends and family of the arrestees wept and screamed denunciations of Trump and immigration officials.

Relatives say that deportation will be a "death sentence" due to the ongoing war and sectarian strife that has enveloped Iraq since the US invasion of 2003. While ICE claims they are only deporting dangerous criminals, relatives say some of the arrestees were convicted for crimes as minor as marijuana possession and that many of the convictions are decades old.

The decision by the Trump administration to deport refugees to Iraq explodes the claims that the US wars in Iraq and Syria are "humanitarian" interventions aimed at protecting the population. In violation of international law, the US government is sending the arrestees into an active warzone in a region that it continues to bomb. Iraq has been laid to waste by 25 years of permanent US-led war. The death toll is in the millions.

As the ICE raids were taking place Sunday, the Department of Defense issued a press release announcing that the US military launched seven air strikes in Iraq, hitting Bayji, Kisik, Mosul, and Tal Afar in recent days.

Family members were informed that their relatives could be sent to the Iraqi city of Erbil, located *less than two hours by car* from Mosul, a city under active siege where the US has killed thousands of civilians and where the US-backed invasion force has been accused of using the chemical white phosphorous against the population.

Mosul, which has been largely demolished by the US siege, is the seat of a leading Chaldean Catholic Church diocese and the home of ethnic Chaldeans, an Assyrian population whose roots in Iraq date back over 5,500 years.

Although the Chaldean minority in Iraq was not targeted by the secular regime of Saddam Hussein, persecution grew after the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 as the US stoked sectarian conflict in the country's northern Kurdish region in an effort to destabilize the Ba'athist government.

Conditions drastically worsened after the US invasion, which fueled sectarian warfare as the US military mobilized Shi'ite forces against insurgents in the majority Sunni areas, and both Islamic factions persecuted religious minorities like Yazidis and Chaldeans. Over 80 Chaldean churches have been bombed since the US occupation began.

Since the 2003 US invasion, Iraq's total Christian population has fallen from 1.5 million to 400,000 due to death and emigration. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians fled to Syria after the US invasion, only to now find themselves trapped in the conflict raging there.

In order to stoke civil war and force the ouster of Bashar al-Assad in neighboring Syria, the US has backed an opposition dominated by Syria's Al Qaeda affiliate, the Al Nusra Front, which has also carried out atrocities against Chaldeans in both Syria and Iraq. Al Qaeda is believed to be responsible for the 2008

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assassination of Mosul's Chaldean Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahno.

In the last three years, ISIS has routinely destroyed Chaldean churches, killed religious officials, and desecrated ancient ruins. The Islamist group developed in Iraq and emerged in Syria under conditions where the US's deliberate policy was to fuel violent religious conflict. In Iraq, the purpose is to keep the population divided and more easily dominated by Washington. In Syria, the aim is to bring down Assad.

Sunday's round-up is the product of a deal made in March by the Trump administration with the Iraqi government that removed the country from the administration's revised executive order barring travel from seven predominantly-Muslim nations. Under the terms of the deal, Iraq agreed to take deportees from the US, something the country has not done for years.

Many Chaldeans at Monday's demonstration told the WSWS they voted for Trump because he claimed he would protect Christians in Iraq and Syria. An older Chaldean man whose brother was arrested said, "I voted for Trump, it's not fair. This is our home, where are we to go in Iraq? We have no country, that's why we came to America!"

Steve, another Chaldean protester whose brother was arrested, said, "Trump lied, he said he would go after people without legal papers, but everyone they arrested had papers. My brother went in for a regular check-up with immigration authorities, and he got picked up at home one week later. If they took your brother, father, sister, or mother, how would you feel? What would you do?"

Scenes like the one that played out in a church parking lot in Michigan on Monday afternoon are becoming increasingly common in the US. In the first three months following his inauguration, Trump's administration arrested over 40,000 immigrants, an escalation from the already high numbers deported under Barack Obama.

Across the country, parents of all backgrounds are being torn from their children and from one another. Many, including those from the Middle East, Central America and Southeast Asia, will be sent back to impoverished disaster zones suffering from the impact of US imperialist intervention.

The number of lives shattered by these policies is in the tens of millions, and yet there is near total silence from the Democratic Party on Trump's mass deportation program.

Instead, the Democratic Party is throwing its entire political energy behind advancing unsubstantiated neo-McCarthyite claims that Trump is an agent of Russia, amplified by highly publicized Senate hearings.

But the Democrats' attempt to whip up public hysteria over "foreign meddling" may exacerbate xenophobic confusion, further poisoning the political climate and creating conditions in which "foreigners" and immigrants may find themselves the victims of physical attacks. The Democrats' anti-Russian campaign is providing right-wing paramilitary groups and the Bannon-Miller faction of the Trump White House with a springboard to direct social anger against immigrants.

If public hearings were held on Trump's deportation program, facts would emerge that would shock tens of millions and educate them on the horrific conditions immigrants face.

For example, the government is setting up a network of camps to house hundreds of thousands of immigrants, including those who have committed no crimes. The government has considered mobilizing 100,000 National Guard troops across 11 western and southwestern states to incarcerate millions of immigrants. ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are filled with thousands of fascistic officers who describe beating and arresting immigrants as "fun." Violations of immigrants' due process rights are so routine they are treated as par for the course by immigration attorneys and judges.

The Democrats have not and will not demand hearings to investigate these widespread violations of democratic rights, in part because Barack Obama's administration carried out similar crimes and deported 2.7 million immigrants. The task of bringing the Trump administration to justice for the attacks on immigrants therefore falls to the working class.

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