

ICE arrests nearly 500 immigrants in raids on “sanctuary cities” across US

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The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency announced Thursday that it carried out a sweeping, nationwide crackdown on immigrants living in so-called “sanctuary cities.” The campaign, dubbed “Operation Safe City,” involved the arrests of 498 individuals over a four-day period ending Wednesday.

Major metropolitan areas across the US were targeted in the latest ICE raids, including Los Angeles County (167 arrests), Philadelphia (107), Denver (63), New York (45), Seattle (33), Baltimore (28), Cook County, Illinois (30), San Jose (27), Washington, D.C. (14) as well as the entire state of Massachusetts (50).

The immigrants abducted in these raids represent a broad swath of the world’s population, coming from 42 countries.

In their press release, ICE details ten sensationalized stories of the crimes for which some of these immigrants have been accused. They then claim that 317 of those detained had prior criminal convictions, implying that 181 had no criminal record whatsoever. The most common offense cited by ICE was drunk driving, for which 86 of the undocumented immigrants have been detained and face deportation.

Any crimes they may have committed are a product of the diseased social relations of capitalism and can largely be attributed to the impacts of poverty and desperation that have driven them to leave their home countries to come to the US, where they face ostracism and demonization by the government and media.

The ICE press release states, “Operation ‘Safe City’ focused on cities and regions where ICE deportation officers are denied access to jails and prisons to interview suspected immigration violators or jurisdictions where ICE detainers are not honored.”

The term “sanctuary city” refers to those cities that, due to public pressure stemming from sizable

immigrant populations, restrain their local police from fully complying with ICE agents’ deportation requests.

These cities are largely overseen by Democratic politicians, who have offered the most tepid response to the assault on immigrants being carried out by the Trump administration. The sweeping ICE raids themselves expose the lie that there is the possibility for any kind of “sanctuary” to exist under the current economic and political system.

The press release quotes ICE Acting Director Thomas Homan as saying, “Sanctuary jurisdictions that do not honor detainers or allow us access to jails and prisons are shielding criminal aliens from immigration enforcement and creating a magnet for illegal immigration. As a result, ICE is forced to dedicate more resources to conduct at-large arrests in these communities.”

He continued, “ICE’s goal is to build cooperative, respectful relationships with our law enforcement partners to help prevent dangerous criminal aliens from being released back onto the streets. Noncooperation policies severely undermine that effort at the expense of public safety.”

The crackdown on “sanctuary cities” is intended to cultivate authoritarian sentiments within Trump’s far-right base of support, as well as embolden the fascistic agents and operatives within ICE itself.

During his presidential campaign—which was launched with a viciously xenophobic diatribe against Mexican immigrants—Trump repeatedly denounced “sanctuary” cities, and upon his election signed an executive order curbing funding to such cities. In late April, California District Court Judge William H. Orrick blocked the executive order, arguing that Trump overstepped his presidential authority.

The latest ICE raids coincide with Trump’s issuance

of a new, indefinite travel ban targeting the citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad, North Korea and Venezuela, which was signed by Trump on Sunday night. The new ban is being implemented after the 90-day lifespan of the initial Supreme Court-sanctioned ban elapsed.

Further escalating the clampdown on immigration, Trump announced on Friday in a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that the number of refugees allowed into the US next year would be capped at 45,000, the lowest number since 1980. It also came to light this week that the Department of Homeland Security is expanding a major operation to collect and analyze the social media accounts of all those who seek to immigrate to the United States and apply for citizenship.

On Thursday, *Politico* released a report compiling State Department data on the cumulative impact of the two previous travel bans implemented via executive orders signed by Trump this year, dubbed the “Muslim ban” for targeting majority-Muslim countries. *Politico* found that the monthly average of visitor visas granted to the countries affected by the bans has fallen by 44 percent compared to annual data for 2016. These visas are issued primarily to business travelers, tourists and students.

Overall, the *Politico* report found that “non-immigrant visas to people from all Arab nations fell 16 percent and the number issued to people from the world’s nearly 50 majority-Muslim countries fell 8 percent, even as the number issued to people from all nations was virtually unchanged.”

In response to the latest travel ban, the ACLU has filed an amendment to its existing lawsuit challenging the Trump administration’s previous travel ban. In a statement, ACLU executive director Anthony Romero said, “President Trump’s newest travel ban is still a Muslim ban at its core, and it certainly engages in discrimination based on national origin, which is unlawful.”



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