

# ICE conducts 77 workplace raids in Northern California

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5 February 2018

Last Monday through Wednesday, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents initiated a targeted crackdown on immigrants in cities across Northern California, carrying out workplace audits at 77 businesses primarily in San Francisco, San Jose and Sacramento, the three largest cities in the region.

The raids involved ICE agents issuing notices of inspection to the businesses, mandating that within three days they provide I-9 records proving that their employees are legally allowed to work in the US. If businesses are found to have undocumented employees, employers could face criminal charges and fines, and any undocumented workers could be arrested and face deportation.

Though there have been no reports of employers or employees being charged or arrested as a result of the ICE raids, the purpose of the raids is to incite a climate of general fear among immigrants and discourage business owners from hiring immigrants in the future. Arrests could begin at any moment, as ICE notoriously gives no warning prior to its deportation roundups.

The searches are believed to be the largest localized raids since the election of Donald Trump. In fiscal year 2017, ICE conducted 1,360 I-9 audits across the US, or roughly 26 per week; last week's raids in Northern California alone roughly tripled that figure.

Commenting on the wide scale of the raids, Los Angeles-based attorney Angelo Paparelli told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "Serving 77 notices of inspection on different employers in the last three days within a single area of responsibility, in this case, San Francisco, appears unprecedented."

The workplace raids follow last month's revelations that ICE is plotting to arrest at least 1,500 immigrants across the Northern California region, in what would likely be the largest immigration raid in US history.

An anonymous source informed of the situation told the

*Chronicle* that ICE plans to pour in agents from across the country for a coordinated dragnet roundup that will target both neighborhoods and workplaces. The *Chronicle* article, published January 17, gave no specific date for the raids, reporting only that they would take place "within weeks."

The targeting of Northern California is a political statement that ICE and the federal government will brook no opposition to their fascistic, anti-immigrant policies. In a series of public statements in recent months, ICE director Thomas Homan has expressed the agency's contempt for so-called "sanctuary cities" and the state of California as a whole.

Facing popular pressure from the vast immigrant population living in California, last September the state legislature voted to pass Senate Bill 54, which was signed into law in October by Democratic Governor Jerry Brown. The law designates California as the first "sanctuary state" in the US, imposing limited restrictions on state and local police agencies' ability to coordinate with ICE to carry out arrests and deportations.

Exactly a week after the passage of Senate Bill 54—September 24-27—ICE carried out its most sweeping wave of arrests under Trump, arresting 498 immigrants nationwide, primarily in "sanctuary cities," including 167 in Los Angeles County alone. The primary sponsor of Senate Bill 54 was Kevin de León, a Democrat representing Los Angeles.

When signing the bill into law, Brown revealed the two-faced nature of the law, which is meant to enable Democrats in the state to save face while offering no genuine resistance to the Gestapo-like actions of ICE. He stressed that the law would "not prevent or prohibit Immigration and Customs Enforcement or the Department of Homeland Security from doing their own work in any way."

Nevertheless, after Senate Bill 54 went into effect

January 1, Homan fulminated against the state in an interview with Fox News the following day, declaring, “California better hold on tight. They’re about to see a lot more special agents, a lot more deportation officers in the state of California. If the politicians of California don’t want to protect their communities, then ICE will.”

Homan also brazenly called for the arrest of state and local officials that support “sanctuary city” policies, declaring, “We’ve got to start charging some of these politicians with crimes.”

The bipartisan character of the assault on immigrants finds expression in the figure of Homan, who first made a name for himself during the Democratic administration of Barack Obama, which oversaw the largest number of deportations of any administration in US history.

In 2015, then-President Obama bestowed upon Homan the Presidential Rank Award, the government’s highest civil service award. At the time, Homan was the executive associate director of ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations, responsible for overseeing ICE’s deportation infrastructure. A *Washington Post* article at the time noted, “Thomas Homan departs people. And he’s really good at it.”

Under Trump, the most fascistic elements within the state apparatus, including figures like Homan, have been emboldened to implement their reactionary agenda. The acquiescence of the Democrats to this drive toward dictatorship has exposed the utterly reactionary character of this party, which supports Wall Street, militarism, and the assault on immigrants.

In order to carry out a struggle in defense of immigrant rights, the American working class must irrevocably break with the Democratic Party and fight to unite the working class internationally under a socialist program. The looming mass roundups throughout Northern California underscore the urgency that such a program be adopted by the most far-sighted layers of the working class.



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