

Trump's reign of terror on California immigrants

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On a sunny Sunday morning in Napa County, California this past weekend, the 14-year-old daughter of a construction worker named Armando Nunez Salgado filmed through tears as her father was dragged away by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who parked outside their home in unmarked cars, walked into the family's backyard through a side gate, and arrested him.

One ICE agent is heard telling Nunez's daughter, Isabel, "If you turn the camera off, we'll tell you where we're going to take him."

ICE conducted ten other arrests Sunday across Northern California, though their main purpose was to make their dangerous presence known. They congregated in front of movie theaters, taco stands, and other public places so residents could get a good look. These sightings caused false rumors of raids to spread across the region, prompting panic.

Sunday's arrests followed an unprecedented public warning Friday by Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf that mass ICE raids across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area were imminent. ICE "is preparing to conduct an operation in the Bay Area, including Oakland, starting as soon as within the next 24 hours," she said in a press release, citing an internal anonymous source. Schaaf's statement came after Trump said Thursday that California would "see crime like nobody has ever seen crime in this country" unless immigrants are deported.

Angel Calderon, Director of the Napa-based farmworker housing nonprofit Casa de Guanajuato, told the *World Socialist Web Site* that tensions among immigrants are extremely high. "There are rumors that officials are scouting out Mexican businesses to intimidate us," he said. "I've lived here for 40 years and I've never seen it like this. The fear is very real."

And this fear is based in fact. ICE arrests rose 30

percent across the country in the 2017 fiscal year, up to a staggering 143,470 people—equal to the total population of Syracuse, New York or Pasadena, California.

The fact that such horrors are taking place on a daily basis in the US finds no expression in the national corporate press, where this weekend's arrests went entirely unreported.

For its part, the Democratic Party has refused to oppose Trump's anti-immigrant program. During this month's debate over DACA protections, Democrats agreed to build a wall along the US-Mexico border and to drastically increase the size and clout of ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), touting the importance of "border security." The Democrats have still made no deal for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) eligible immigrants, and Monday's Supreme Court ruling allowing a temporary injunction against Trump's cancellation of the DACA program to stay in effect does nothing to protect the long-term status of the 1.8 million people the program affects.

In other words, the Democrats agree with Trump's mass deportations—after all, Democratic president Barack Obama deported 2.7 million during his two terms, more than any previous president. The Democrats have focused all their energy on their phony anti-Russia witch hunt, the goal of which is to force Trump into a more belligerent stance against Russia at the risk of provoking war with the nuclear-armed power.

The Trump administration has targeted the state of California in a thuggish act of political retribution with constitutional consequences. California passed a "sanctuary state" bill last year that prohibits state agencies from handing immigrants' information over to federal immigration officials without a court order.

Though the statewide bill and similar local “sanctuary city” bills are cosmetic and do nothing to block raids and deportations from taking place, the Trump administration is punishing the state for setting up even the mildest obstacle to mass deportations.

In early January, ICE Director Thomas Homan challenged California over the passage of the bill. “California better hold on tight,” he said. “They’re about to see a lot more special agents, a lot more deportation officers...” Referring to officials who sign or pass sanctuary city laws, Homan added, “We gotta start charging some of these politicians with crimes.”

Shortly thereafter, ICE raided roughly one hundred 7-Eleven convenience stores located across the country, including many in California, to intimidate immigrant workers who comprise a large portion of the low-cost convenience store’s clientele. Over a five-day period in mid-February, ICE swept through Southern California and arrested over 200 more immigrants.

Erik Schnabel, Development and Communications Manager for San Jose-based Services Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN) told the WSWS, “It’s really clear that California is being targeted. It is pretty clear that fear and intimidation is what the Trump administration intended.”

Trump and his fascist aides are targeting California, a state of 40 million people, because it houses over 2.5 million undocumented people, nearly a quarter of the national total. One in eight California public school children has an undocumented parent, and over 200,000 of the country’s 700,000 recipients of the DACA program live in the state. The state voted by a 2-to-1 margin against Trump in the 2016 elections.

The federal government’s intimidation campaign is aimed at undercutting the state’s economy, which is heavily dependent on the super exploitation of immigrant labor. The efforts to spread fear and panic are also aimed at transforming the immigrant population into a permanent, deeply impoverished underclass living on the fringes of society. Immigrants in fear of deportation raids are less likely to bring their children to school, seek medical help for health problems or emergencies, seek public aid, report crimes to police, or even leave their homes for work or errands.

The attack on the democratic rights of immigrants has grave implications for the entire working class,

regardless of legal status. Workers will have no way of defending themselves in a society where the government can kidnap people in unmarked cars with tinted windows. The racism and nationalism that has become official government policy under the Trump administration is an attempt to divide the working class.

Xenophobia from the ruling elite is not a purely American disease. Though more people than ever are forcibly displaced from their homes—65.3 million in 2015—the ruling classes of each nation are seeking to direct growing social opposition against the most vulnerable and oppressed.

In Europe, the far right directs widespread hatred of the austerity policies of the social democratic parties along xenophobic lines, and the main bourgeois parties are adopting its program. In Germany, the provisional grand coalition agreement includes immigration restrictions backed by the neo-Nazi Alternative for Germany. In Italy, the upcoming March 4 election takes place under conditions where fascists are attacking immigrants in the streets and all the bourgeois parties are racing to prove their xenophobic bona fides.

The defense of immigrants requires a fight against the capitalist system and the outdated nation-state system, which stands as a central obstacle to the rational organization of the world economy and the free flow of the world’s inhabitants. Only socialist revolution, by abolishing the nation-state system and transforming the world economy to meet global human need and not corporate profit, can guarantee the democratic right of all people to travel the world as they please without risk of harassment or deportation.



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