

ICE carries out mass immigration roundups in Northern California

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Over the past three days, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have detained over 150 undocumented workers in a massive operation in Northern California.

Since Sunday, dozens of ICE agents have conducted broad sweeps of immigrant communities, knocking on doors and arresting those who were unable to produce proper immigration documents. In some cases, ICE agents reportedly claimed to be police officers to induce immigrants to comply with their demands.

The agency has claimed that if not for a last-minute warning by the mayor of Oakland, the sweeps would have captured another 800-plus people, representing an unprecedented attack on immigrant workers in the United States.

On Sunday, a group of federal agents waited outside a Circle K convenience store in the town of Atwater until four construction workers came out with their morning coffee. The agents then surrounded the workers and demanded to know whether they “had permission to be here,” Miguel Botello, who is originally from Mexico told the *Merced Sun-Star*. One agent seized Botello’s wallet and, when he found Botello’s green card, “laughed and asked if it was fake.” After harassing Botello for several minutes, the agents arrested his three coworkers for failing to provide immigration documents.

Botello’s encounter highlights the indiscriminate nature of immigration roundups, in stark contrast to ICE’s repeated claims that it only targets criminals. In fact, according to the agency’s own statement, only half of those arrested in this latest operation had any prior criminal record. This proportion is far lower than the agency has claimed in past operations, indicating a major intensification of the campaign of mass terror against immigrant communities by the Trump

administration.

Late Saturday evening, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf issued a press release warning that she had received credible information that ICE agents were planning a series of raids to round up undocumented workers in the San Francisco Bay Area, including Oakland. The press release said that the information came from multiple sources and that the raids could begin within 24 hours.

In words dripping with xenophobia and contempt for democratic rights, the fascistic acting director of ICE, Thomas Homan, told reporters that “864 criminal aliens and public safety threats remain at large in the community, and I have to believe that some of them were able to elude us thanks to the mayor’s irresponsible decision.” Holman gained notoriety in January by threatening to arrest public officials who refused to cooperate with immigration agents.

Schaaf, a Democrat, did not provide any additional details on the timing or location of the impending operation, and noted in the press release that ICE has used rumors of impending raids in the past to create a climate of fear and paranoia in immigrant communities. Neither Schaaf nor any of the other Democratic politicians who dominate local politics in Northern California made any effort to mobilize public resources or popular support in defense of immigrant communities.

Even the decision to issue her vague, hollow warning was made only after consultation with attorneys to ensure the mayor did not run afoul of federal law. That this was the only action taken when faced with an unprecedented assault on immigrant workers only further underscores the cynicism inherent in local Democratic officials’ “pro-immigrant” electoral posturing.

The latest operation was designed to target so-called “sanctuary cities,” including Oakland and San Francisco, where public employees are prohibited from assisting federal immigration officials in detaining or deporting undocumented immigrants. The Trump administration has vowed to crack down on sanctuary cities, which it sees as obstacles to the planned intensification of the savage program of mass detention and deportation begun under the Obama administration.

This latest operation comes amid an escalation of ICE raids to detain and deport immigrant workers in recent months. Earlier last month, the agency raided 77 Northern California businesses in immigration sweeps, arresting 200 workers at their job sites. That followed a January operation targeting 100 7-Eleven stores around the country.

Marking a further escalation of the federal assault on immigrant workers, US District Judge Gonzalo Curiel ruled Tuesday that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) could suspend environmental reviews in order to construct Trump’s infamous border wall along the US border with Mexico on an expedited basis. The judge did not rule on the constitutional aspects of the case, arguing instead that the DHS has broad authority to waive regulations in enhancing “border security.” Trump is planning to visit Southern California in March to review prototypes for the border wall.

Curiel’s ruling further underscores the hypocrisy of Democratic Party claims to defend the rights of immigrants. Democrats have been strident defenders of the judge’s supposed virtue since 2016, when a racist comment against the judge by Trump offered an opportunity to score political points with Hispanic voters. The silence of leading Democrats in the aftermath of Curiel’s ruling demonstrates their fundamental agreement with the Trump administration’s border wall and right-wing immigration policies more broadly.

Since selling out DACA recipients during budget negotiations in January, congressional Democrats have worked feverishly to strike a deal with Republicans that would dramatically increase funding for border “security”—including the border wall—and shower resources on the Department of Homeland Security and immigration agencies.

Despite the Democrats complete capitulation, it

remains unclear what will happen to the approximately 700,000 DACA recipients after the March 5 deadline set by Trump for the program’s expiration. Guaranteeing the security of undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US as children was the ostensible purpose of the Democratic Party’s participation in negotiations with Trump and a government shutdown earlier this year, yet in less a week they may all be subject to detention and deportation.

Even as the onslaught ramps up the working class is deeply hostile to the Trump administration’s anti-immigrant program. Recent polls have found overwhelming support for granting citizenship to DACA recipients and for allowing all undocumented immigrants to obtain citizenship.



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