

Thousands across US rally against Trump administration's attacks on immigrant families

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Thousands took part in protest rallies across the US on Thursday and Friday as revelations continue to emerge of the Trump administration's deliberate and cruel efforts to break up families in order to deter future immigration to the United States.

During the six weeks beginning April 19 and ending May 31, 1,995 children were forcibly separated from 1,940 parents and guardian adults by immigration officials, according to a report released Friday by the Department of Homeland Security.

The forced separation is part of the Trump's "zero tolerance" policy against incoming immigrants.

Previously, immigrants with no criminal record caught at the US-Mexico border were either sent back or, if detained, housed with family members while being processed in immigration court. Under the Trump administration's policy, however, criminal, rather than misdemeanor, charges are being brought against every adult immigrant apprehended. This has led to the forcible separation of parents from their children while detained.

The United Nations has asked US authorities to immediately halt such separation. The UN request is being ignored, however, and the Trump administration has signaled its willingness to press ahead with a deliberate violation of international law.

The mood at the protests was typically one of anger and hostility to the government and its assault against immigrants. Protesters chanted at a rally in Washington, DC, "Until they arrest us, we will stay here, however long it takes."

In Albany, the state capital of New York, similar sentiments were expressed. Protester Henry Thornhill stated, in an interview with Albany News 10, "I am not

going to be silent and just, you know, take what the government gives me." Jennifer Vasquez, another protester, said, "No agency is going to put any more fear into me. I'm going to come anytime, any day to advocate not only for my children but for all the children of the world."

The protests have also drawn support from various celebrities including actor John Cusack and Lin-Manuel Miranda, composer of the musical "Hamilton."

At a rally attended by several hundred in Detroit, oppositional sentiment was also quite high. "We're paying our taxes to fund these detention centers instead of allowing these families to go and be with their families," rally attendee Sandra Gatan said in an interview with Detroit 4 News.

Several hundred also gathered outside the Federal Detention Center in the MacArthur Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. "We have to say enough is enough. This stops now," said Hector, a protester and professor at Pasadena City College.

Some of the protests were also addressed by Democratic Party politicians who are worried that the still limited demonstrations could broaden into an even more direct challenge to the government's immigration policy.

Most of the protests across the country were organized by the group Familias Unidas No Dividas (Families Belong Together). The group released a statement in advance of the protests saying, "We are disheartened by the lack of leadership in Congress whose job is to be a check on the federal government when it overreaches and abuses power. We are calling for immediate reforms and an end to this barbarism."

The Trump administration's zero-tolerance policy

was deliberately announced by US Attorney General Jeff Sessions last month in a speech to the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies. “So, if you cross the border unlawfully, even a first offense, we’re going to prosecute you,” Sessions said. “If you don’t want your child to be separated, then don’t bring them across the border illegally.”

As repulsive as Sessions’ comments are, he is building on the framework erected by the Obama Administration, which deported more immigrants than any other administration in US history. In fact, photographs recently publicized in an effort to expose Trump’s barbaric policies were taken in 2014 under Obama’s tenure, when a similar policy of family separation was being carried out.

The separation policy is made even more horrific as parents often don’t even know where their children have been taken to and vice versa. In recent courtroom audio obtained by Vice News, an immigration judge in McAllen, Texas, was compelled to tell assembled parents in handcuffs and leg restraints that he had no information about the whereabouts of their children.

The courts in McAllen have become an assembly line of sorts for immigration proceedings with public defenders admitting they are only given about 5 minutes ahead of trial to meet with their clients. The courtrooms are typically packed with 75 or more defendants present at a given time.

The conditions are becoming more and more reminiscent of 1930s and 1940s style internment camps. Refugees attempting to escape the horrors inflicted upon them by US imperialism are not only refused asylum but indeed become victims of new crimes for daring to attempt escape.

Over the course of the past month, pictures have been leaked of hundreds of frightened children herded together in fenced-in enclosures sleeping on the floor with minimal bedding. At a media tour of one of these facilities on Wednesday, an executive told the assembled reporters, “You may want to smile, the kids feel a little like animals in a cage being looked at.”

This mad punitive rush by the administration has already run into logistical hurdles which it is working quickly to overcome. With the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) currently holding nearly 11,000 youths across the country, existing detention centers do not have enough capacity for the administration’s

plans. Instead, tent camps are being built on military bases to house surplus children.

The “moderate” wing of the Republican Party in the House of Representatives, led by Congressman Paul Ryan, is currently pushing legislation to open a path to citizenship for some young immigrants brought to the US without proper documentation which would prevent parents from being separated from their children during the course of deportation proceedings. The reactionary “moderate” proposal would end the diversity lottery which gives 50,000 foreign nationals a visa each year along with a path to US citizenship, and would authorize an additional \$25 billion for border security.

An even more hard line proposal is also making its way through the House which would not stop the separation of immigrant parents and children. When asked this week about the two proposals on the “Fox and Friends” television program, Trump replied, “I’m looking at both of them. I certainly wouldn’t sign the more moderate one.”

Buoyed by the absence of any Democratic Party opposition, aside from efforts to use allegations of Russian collusion in the 2016 election to attempt to shift his foreign policy, Trump has felt free to more openly vent his racist anti-immigrant sentiments.

The *World Socialist Web Site* welcomes and encourages the growth of protests in defense of immigrant rights. However, workers must break with any illusions they may have in the Democrats, who have militarized the border, overseen the deportation of millions, placed migrant children in cages and abandoned a defense of young DACA recipients. The successful defense of the rights of all workers, native born and immigrant alike, can only take place on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.



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