

Trump administration planning massive expansion of jails for immigrant children

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The Trump administration is preparing to dramatically expand the number of immigrant children imprisoned and separated from their families. Officials told the *Washington Examiner* that the administration plans to expand child detention to 30,000 by August, detaining 250 additional children per day.

This corresponds to new reports from the border. Sister Norma Pimentel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, told the *World Socialist Web Site*: “They are trying to increase capacity at the tent cities so that nobody is released. That’s their goal, and we will probably see that very soon. There are other locations where tent cities are coming. I hear they will be increasing these more.”

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen made an unexpected return to Washington DC to give a fascist press briefing yesterday afternoon in which she said reports of cruelty were “hearsay” and merely a “narrative.” The real issue, she said, is that “the border is being overrun by those who have no right to cross it.”

Children are being “well taken care of,” she lied, calling it “offensive” that any reporter would call the policy inhumane and adding that family separation “is not a controversial idea.” Earlier yesterday, she tweeted that opposition to the policy is the product of “misreporting” by “press & advocacy groups,” which is “irresponsible and unproductive” and “must stop.”

Trump responded to growing opposition by demonizing immigrant parents in a series of Monday morning tweets. In one, he declared, “Children are being used by the worst criminals on earth as a means to enter our country.”

At a press conference with military leaders later, Trump echoed the language of Italian neo-fascists when he said, “The United States will not be a migrant camp and it will not be a refugee holding facility, not on my watch.”

Hundreds of millions of people in the US and internationally increasingly view the United States as a pariah state that functions in foreign and domestic policy on the basis of total criminality.

United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid

Ra’ad Al Hussein denounced the US government yesterday in his global report on human rights. Citing an American Association of Pediatrics statement calling the separation of children from their parents followed by detention “government-sanctioned child abuse,” Hussein said, “The thought that any state would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable. I call on the United States to immediately end the practice of forcible separation of these children.”

New details are emerging of the brutal treatment of immigrants in those facilities already in use. Christina Garcia of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, told the WSWS that the government is hiding children from their parents and refusing them the right to communicate with one another. “It’s really scary to see that these detention centers continue to pop up,” she said. “Their goal is to fill them at max capacity. We are also seeing uncertainty on when these children and parents will be released, where it can take months. We have cases where mothers do not know where their children are for weeks.”

Ruben Garcia, who runs the non-profit Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas, told the WSWS, “We are helping a mother who has a 14-year-old son and when she was prosecuted for crossing, her son was taken from her.”

He said that it took the mother months to make bond and win release from detention in Texas. Her son had been shipped to detention in Chicago. “The son was angry,” he said. “He never knew what was happening. The government never gave him info about whether or when he would see his mother again. She couldn’t call him and he couldn’t call her.”

He also noted that immigrants are being routinely denied the right to file for asylum. “They are denying people even the opportunity to file for asylum,” he said. “I have a dad with a 16-year-old son escaping violence. They attempted three times to present themselves to a port of entry and they were turned away. CBP [Customs and Border Protection] functions as a law unto themselves.”

Christina Garcia shared a similar story of a mother who

has been separated for her child all year. “The real nightmare, alongside family separation, is the denial of asylum seekers to apply. There are rumors that this is a new policy from above to stop people from requesting asylum.”

Secretary Nielsen flat out lied when she said at yesterday’s press conference that reports of asylum denials were “not true.”

Photos, audio and video were released over the weekend deepening popular shame and horror over the detention of children in cages. One image shows a young child branded with the number “47.”

In audio secretly released from one detention center, border guards can be heard mocking crying children shouting “mommy” and “daddy” and “please don’t deport my dad.”

Another report surfaced of a four-year-old child who was left by guards with a dirty diaper. Unable to change the diaper herself, the child asked older children to do it for her.

DHS and the Department of Health and Human Services released highly selective photos and video from inside child immigration jails, evidently believing its own photos (which depict only older boys) in the cleanest facilities would calm tensions. This plan backfired as millions reacted with disgust to even the “official” footage showing dozens of children in cages huddled under emergency blankets.

There are indications that an explosion of opposition may be on the horizon. A Quinnipiac poll released yesterday showed that 66 percent of Americans oppose the family separation policy, while just 17 percent believe immigration should be decreased. The percentage of people who believe immigrants should not be allowed to stay in the US has fallen nearly in half since 2014, from 35 percent to 19 percent.

Spontaneous demonstrations have broken out in dozens of cities, most of which were not organized by a Democratic Party group. Small groups of people have begun driving to the nearest detention center to protest. In at least one area, the Democratic Party-backed “Women’s March” organization has called protests for the same time as the spontaneously organized protests in an effort to pre-empt popular demonstrations.

The Democratic Party is petrified of the prospect of mass demonstrations and has dispatched a number of congressmen to head them off by carrying out token protests against the administration’s policies. Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama, whose husbands are both to blame for separating millions of family members through mass deportation, issued cynical calls alongside Laura Bush for Trump to halt the forced separations. Fourteen Democratic congresspersons gathered at a facility in Southern California to call family separation “unconscionable.”

The Democrats hope to cover up their own active role in setting up immigrant internment camps across the country detaining thousands of children, including thousands in isolation from their parents. Most of the camps where children are currently held were constructed by Barack Obama, including the large facilities in Dilley and Karnes City, Texas. An American Civil Liberties Union report last month detailed widespread physical, sexual and mental abuse of child detainees by Customs and Border Protection under Obama’s watch.

From mid-2014 to mid-2016 alone, Obama arrested 127,000 “family units,” as the government calls them, or, parents and their children. In 2009, Obama’s DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson told a Senate committee he was implementing a “rapid deportation process” and that “there are adults who brought their children with them. Again, our message to this group is simple: We will send you back.”

An August 2016 *Washington Post* story titled “Inside the [Obama] administration’s \$1 billion deal to detain Central American asylum seekers” reads: “According to lawmakers and administration officials, Johnson determined that the United States could cut down the surge only by demonstrating that asylum seekers wouldn’t receive leniency. Johnson won approval from the White House to explore ramping up family detention for asylum seekers on a scale never before seen in America, part of what he called an ‘aggressive deterrence strategy.’ He ordered ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] to figure out a way to make it work.

“‘This whole thing [was] building and reaching an unsustainable level,’ said Christian Marrone, then Johnson’s chief of staff. ‘We had to take measures to stem the tide.’”

Trump has now extended this policy to qualitatively new levels of brutality. Protests in defense of immigrants must take place independent of and in opposition to both parties responsible for the reign of terror against them.



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