

The United States of America: Land of internment camps

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The United States government has implemented a policy of separating thousands of immigrant children from their parents and locking them in cages in desert tent cities. The American Academy of Pediatrics calls this “child abuse”, Amnesty International says it is “nothing short of torture”, and the United Nations denounces it as “despicable” and an “unconscionable” violation of human rights.

American history has no shortage of ugly episodes—the Trail of Tears, the jailing of fugitive slaves, the deportation of suspected radicals after World War I and the internment of the Japanese-Americans during World War II are only among the most notorious. But the present policy of inhuman persecution and victimization of children represents a level of political depravity and moral degradation that almost defies description. This is happening in the twenty-first century, in a country whose leaders boast endlessly and hypocritically of American democracy and respect for human rights.

Across the United States, thousands of children are currently sitting on concrete slabs locked in cages like animals. Many do not know where their parents are and they are barred from speaking to them. Each day there are 250 more detained children than the day before.

A constellation of camps and tent cities is cropping up across the country, some in desert areas where temperatures are over 100 degrees, to handle the growing detainee population. The crowded jails are filled with the sound of frightened children crying. Guards subject many children to verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

In its level of extreme brutality and callousness, the family separation policy resembles the policies of the Nazi Gestapo. It is a point of departure in American history from which there is no turning back.

The claim that the US represents a force for “democracy” and “human rights” worldwide is shattered.

Such claims were used to invade or intervene in those regions of the world from which tens of millions are now trying to flee. Throughout Central America in the 1970s and 1980s, the US backed dictators whose death squads

murdered and tortured hundreds of thousands. To this day entire societies remain in ruin. The US killed some 3 million people in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the 1960s and 1970s. American imperialism continues to lay waste to much of North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, with the death toll in the millions. Now, the children of the victims of these wars are being thrown in cages by their former invaders.

In the face of popular outrage, the Trump administration has responded by expanding the child tent city networks and intensifying his fascistic attacks on immigrants.

Trump tweeted yesterday that “illegal immigrants, no matter how bad they may be, [are] pour[ing] into and infest[ing] our Country.” In an interview Monday, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said the key distinction between the immigration crackdown and Nazi Germany was that “in Nazi Germany they were keeping Jews from *leaving* the country.”

In a speech yesterday to a small business convention in Washington DC, Trump denounced immigrant parents as “child smugglers.” “When I said they’re not sending their finest,” he said, referencing his claim that immigrants are rapists and criminals, “it turned out I was 100 percent right.”

Trump is building a constituency for this filth. The crowd of businessmen hooted and applauded enthusiastically when Trump proclaimed, “We are taking ‘em out by the thousands!”

This speech also marks the first time that Trump has effectively called for the abolition of due process for immigrants. “We don’t want judges, we want security on the border,” he said. “We don’t want people coming in.”

He laughed at the right of immigrants to appear in court: “I don’t want to try people, I don’t want people coming in, you never get them out.” Immigration lawyers, he added, are “bad people” who “cheat” and “tell these people exactly what to say.”

These remarks indicate that plans are well underway within the Trump White House, where fascist Stephen Miller is directing policy, for drastic new attacks on immigrants

that will place not only their rights but also their lives in danger. There is a dangerous logic to the language the administration employs and the policies it implements.

Millions of people want to know: How can this be stopped?

It is first necessary to recognize the impotence and complicity of the Democratic Party, which cynically claims to oppose the family separation program. Trump's policies are an extension of deportation and detention policies enacted under Bill Clinton and, especially, Barack Obama, who deported 2.7 million people and built a network of jails and detention centers.

When Trump came to power, the Democratic Party voted by a 37-11 margin to confirm John Kelly, a retired general, as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Within weeks, Kelly first proposed implementing a family separation policy.

Later in 2017, Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer publicly offered support for Trump's proposal to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. In January 2018, Senator Bernie Sanders, the former candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination who voted to confirm Kelly, proclaimed his willingness to collaborate with Trump's anti-immigrant policy, saying, "I don't think there's anybody who disagrees that we need strong border security. If the president wants to work with us to make sure we have strong border security, let's do that."

The fight to defend immigrants requires the organized resistance of the working class based on a struggle against the underlying cause of the crisis, the capitalist system.

The entire American political system is rotten to the core. The American ruling class has carried out a quarter-century of imperialist plunder and overseen unbridled corporate exploitation, killing millions, producing tens of millions of refugees and introducing an unprecedented degree of repression, surveillance, censorship and backwardness into domestic life. Trump, his fascist aides and their Democratic accomplices are the product of this process of political degeneration.

The fight in defense of immigrants must seek to unite workers around the world against xenophobia and nationalism. The establishment of child camps in the US is part of a broadening international phenomenon.

Everywhere the ruling class is whipping up racism and national chauvinism to (1) create the juridical framework and physical infrastructure for the repression of striking workers and protesting youth and (2) weaken the working class and dim anti-war sentiment by pitting workers against each other based on race and nationality.

In Italy, Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has called for a national registry of the entire Roma population. The right

wing's demand for the deportation of 500,000 immigrants has created an atmosphere in which violent attacks on immigrants are frequent.

In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel faces calls for mass deportations from within her own party and the neo-fascist Alternative for Germany. The French government severely restricted the right to asylum in April.

All across the world, heightened attacks on immigrants parallel a wave of strikes and protests by the working class. As Leon Trotsky wrote in his 1934 essay *Nationalism and Economic Life*, under capitalism, the ruling class seeks to "protect [itself] by a customs wall and a hedge of bayonets."

The Socialist Equality Party calls for demonstrations and protests in defense of the rights of immigrants. We demand:

- * The immediate release of all children detained in the United States, as well as all immigrants detained in camps and detention centers across the world

- * The abolition of the American Gestapo—the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

- * Active noncooperation with the deportation machine

- * Immediate amnesty for all immigrants without papers in the United States and guarantees of the right to travel and work

- * The provision of trillions of dollars in public services and job training programs to all workers, immigrant and non-immigrant alike. There is enough wealth and room for all.

The working class must bring its social power to bear on the fight to defend immigrants. Committees in workplaces and neighborhoods must be formed to defend immigrant co-workers and neighbors, and to provide support and assistance against the American Gestapo's terrorization of work locations and communities. The government does not have the right to tear workers from their jobs and loved ones from their families.

This can take place only on the basis of a revolutionary fight against the capitalist system.



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