Amid silence from Democrats on attacks on immigrants

Trump moves to restrict asylum

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A series of policy changes that have either been implemented or are being pursued by the Trump administration, taken together, represent an unprecedented assault on the right to asylum in the United States for those fleeing persecution and violence.

In an article published Wednesday, titled "Trump Administration Considers Unprecedented Curbs on Asylum for Migrants," the *New York Times* details a number of policies that comprise "part of a larger plan developing to reshape the reputation of America as a safe haven."

According to the newspaper, the most extreme measure that is presently under consideration, proposed this spring by elements within the Customs and Border Protection leadership, would "upend the system by eliminating the use of offices along the border, known as 'ports of entry,' as asylum processing centers," forcing asylum seekers to apply for refugee status from their nation of origin.

Given that the average duration of asylum proceedings is about two years, this would be tantamount to a death sentence for many seeking refuge from the violence and persecution that more than a century of US imperialist domination has produced throughout much of Latin America.

The newspaper continues: "On Wednesday, the administration announced new guidance for asylum officers, who are the first to evaluate claims along the border, instructing them to scrutinize asylum applications according to stricter standards, and to weigh the applicants' claims of fear against whether they have previously entered the United States illegally."

In reality, most of those seeking asylum in the United States have no legal means of entering the country due to the arbitrary, complex and lengthy visa application process the US has created to impose tight controls on entry by citizens of poorer countries. US law requires asylum seekers to be physically present within the United States before they may apply, leaving many with no recourse other than to enter the country illegally to pursue their asylum claims.

This new "guidance" may represent the initial stage of a policy reportedly under consideration by Attorney General Jeff Sessions that would automatically reject asylum claims filed by anyone who has previously entered the country unlawfully. It comes after a similar guidance issued in June that effectively removed domestic and gang violence from the forms of persecution for which asylum should be granted.

This intensified attack on immigrants and democratic rights more generally is going unopposed by the Democratic Party, under conditions where the Democrats and the great bulk of the corporate media have all but dropped the immigration issue in their single-minded focus on President Donald Trump's supposedly treasonous role at the Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The *Times* report comes amid further revelations of the barbaric conditions that prevail within the detention camps holding thousands of children who remain separated from their parents under Trump's former "zero tolerance" immigration policy, as well as the denial of any means for parents to communicate with separated children. The latter atrocity has triggered a wave of hunger strikes by mothers at one Texas military prison camp.

Other proposals under consideration include further tightening of the "credible fear" test used in assessing asylum claims and the detention of asylum applicants or denial of their right to work for the duration of their

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proceedings.

Meanwhile, a lawsuit filed in a federal court in California highlights the torture and abuse that the thousands of immigrant children endure in the child detention camps that have been erected across the country, including the denial of the most basic necessities such as food, water and medicine. Children returned to their parents have been emaciated, ill or traumatized as a result of their detention.

Their parents fare little better, with some resorting to hunger strikes in protest over the conditions they face and the denial of their right to communicate with children who have been separated from them.

The *Independent* reported Monday that 2,800 children separated from their parents under the administration's "zero tolerance" policy, supposedly ended on June 20, remain in child prisons, where they are forced to clean filthy toilets and are not allowed to touch one another.

With the court-imposed deadline to reunite all children looming next week, it is increasingly apparent that the Trump administration has no intention of abiding by the court order. In the minority of cases where it does, "reunification" will be used as a pretext for arbitrary detention or deportation.

For its part, the Republican-controlled House Appropriations Committee has passed an amendment to the Department of Health and Human Services budget that would create a statutory basis for interning children with their families indefinitely in the so-called "family detention centers" that are being erected across the country.

This reversion to the type of mass detention policies implemented by the Roosevelt administration against Japanese-Americans during World War II is the spearhead of an assault against the democratic rights of the entire working class. As the American ruling class prepares for war against major international rivals such as Russia and China, and perhaps Germany as well, and for the growth of social opposition domestically, it increasingly abandons the forms of rule of bourgeois democracy and turns to the methods of dictatorship.

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