Over 130 immigrant workers arrested in ICE raids in Minnesota and Nebraska

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Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in collaboration with a broad assortment of other federal, state and local police agencies, carried out a massive, coordinated series of raids in northern Nebraska and southern Minnesota Wednesday to detain and deport immigrant workers on the fraudulent pretext of defending workers from exploitation and abuse by their employers.

The operation, targeting primarily agricultural workers, represents a significant escalation of Trump's reign of terror and comes in the midst of ongoing efforts by the Democrats and the bulk of the corporate media to play down the administration's war on immigrants. Instead, the Democratic Party continues to focus its efforts on seeking to whip up hysteria against Russia and attack Trump as a stooge of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

All workers must be warned that the ongoing and escalating series of workplace raids are test runs for attacks on native-born as well as immigrant workers, as the government builds its repressive apparatus in preparation for mass working-class struggles. The entire working class must mobilize to demand a halt to the attack on immigrants and the dismantling of the Gestapo-like immigration agencies ICE and Border and Customs Protection (BCP).

Beginning Wednesday morning and lasting into the afternoon, between 350 and 400 agents of various security agencies arrived at roughly a dozen workplaces in full military-style gear, demanding immigration documents before detaining at least 14 employers on fraud, wire fraud and money laundering charges, along with 134 workers. The raids were concentrated in the town of O'Neill, Nebraska, located 160 miles northwest of Omaha.

The operation was one of the largest in the 15-year history of the Department of Homeland Security, which claimed the raids were the culmination of a months-long investigation into a scheme involving identity fraud, wage theft and physical abuse inflicted on the workers by the business owners, whom DHS claimed were targeted in the operation. Workers swept up in the raids were supposedly going to be processed and released unless prior criminal convictions warranted the initiation of deportation proceedings, in which case they would remain in ICE custody.

Tracy Cormier, the special agent leading the investigation, told the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, "The whole investigation was initiated, basically, because we knew that these businesses were cheating these workers and cheating taxpayers and cheating their competition."

According to Cormier, the businesses had engaged in a complex scheme to knowingly and illegally employ undocumented workers, using fake Social Security numbers to get around federal laws mandating verification of legal residency.

The claim that the raids and mass arrests of workers were carried out to defend these and other workers who are in the country legally does not withstand a moment's scrutiny.

Since taking office in January of last year, Trump has launched a series of military-style raids against foreign-born workers in California and Ohio, in which native-born co-workers defending their immigrant brothers and sisters have also been detained. These police-state actions have been carried out without regard for democratic rights or due process.

Wednesday's raids came amid mounting opposition by broad sections of the US and world population to Trump's policies and his fascistic rants against immigrants, as well as a series of lawsuits seeking to

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overturn the family separation policy it has implemented to terrorize immigrant communities.

The latest such lawsuit, filed Tuesday by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), hopes to overturn the removal of gang and domestic violence as legal bases for granting asylum, forcing families and children to return and face persecution, or even death, in their home countries.

However, the experience of the judicially-mandated end to the family separation policy should dispel any illusions that the Trump administration will abide by the rule of law or fundamental legal rights. Today, hundreds of children remain separated from their families in child prisons or foster care, with little prospect of ever seeing their parents after being arbitrarily labeled “ineligible for reunification” due to crimes supposedly committed by their parents or other flimsy pretexts.

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