

12,800 immigrant children detained in American internment camps

Eric London
14 September 2018

On Wednesday night, the *New York Times* reported that the Trump administration has been covertly conducting a campaign to round up and detain thousands of immigrant youth traveling to the US without their parents or guardians.

According to the report, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have increased the number of detained unaccompanied minors nearly six-fold, from an average of 2,400 each night in May 2017 to 12,800 each night this month. The network of some 100 child internment camps and relocation centers located throughout the US is now reaching capacity, with immigrant youth packed together in cells and bunk houses, subject to physical, emotional and sexual assault by guards.

The Trump administration is preparing to drastically expand the size of the internment camp cities.

Last Thursday, the administration announced it was abandoning a 1997 court settlement barring the government from detaining children for over 20 days, meaning the government will now detain children indefinitely.

On Tuesday, the Trump administration announced it was tripling the size of the Tornillo tent city internment camp located outside El Paso. The camp, which was constructed in June to “temporarily” house children separated from their families under the Department of Justice’s “zero tolerance” policy, will now hold 3,800 children.

In June, the administration initiated a new policy requiring potential sponsors to submit fingerprints to immigration authorities—a blatant attempt to scare undocumented relatives and isolate the young people in jail. As a result, although over 40,000 unaccompanied children have been arrested by CBP in the first 10 months of fiscal year 2018, the number of youth that

have been released from detention and placed with sponsors has fallen 30 percent.

The massive increase in the size of the interned child population comes six weeks after a federal judge ordered the Trump administration to reunite all children separated from their parents through the implementation of the “zero tolerance” policy in May.

The administration has blatantly disregarded the court order, forcing non-profits to send representatives through remote villages in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to knock on doors in search of the deported parents of separated children.

There are over 400 children who remain separated from their family as a result of the “zero tolerance” policy. As *AZ Central* recently noted, “It now appears increasingly likely that hundreds of those families will never be reunited because parents were deported from the United States intentionally or mistakenly waived their rights to reunification.”

Aside from the initial *Times* report, the revelation of a six-fold increase in child detention was blacked out by the corporate press. At press time, none of the following publications had covered the issue: CNN, *Politico*, Fox News, MSNBC, *The Hill*, and ABC News.

Though the Democratic Party feigned opposition to Trump’s family separation policy in response to popular outrage, the Democrats are responsible for laying the basis for Trump’s attack on immigrants. Obama also detained thousands of children, in particular during the migration surge of 2014. Now, Democrats have all but dropped immigrants as an issue in this November’s midterm elections.

As PBS noted, “no Democrats running in competitive Senate races in November have advocated abolishing ICE.” In fact, five of the six most vulnerable Senate

Democrats up for reelection voted with Trump over 40 percent of the time this last term: Bill Nelson (43 percent), Claire McCaskill (45 percent), Joe Donnelly (55 percent), Heidi Heitkamp (55 percent) and Joe Manchin (61 percent).

Over 30 percent of House Democrats recently voted to pass an anti-immigrant bill that will lead to the deportation of hundreds of thousands with minor criminal records. Among those supporting the bill was House Latino Caucus Chairperson Michelle Lujan-Grisham, who wept crocodile tears over the mistreatment of immigrants in the spring. Many self-proclaimed “progressive Democrats” voted in favor or abstained, including DNC Vice Chair Keith Ellison and nearly the entire Northern California Democratic congressional delegation.

Many Democrats running against incumbent Republicans for House seats are running on explicitly anti-immigrant programs.

Arizona Democratic congresswoman and candidate for Senate Krysten Sinema echoed Trump when she said last month that “ICE does provide some important functions, ICE is responsible for removing dangerous criminal aliens, aliens who hurt other people by engaging in rape or murder.”

Amy McGrath, who is running for congress in Kentucky, denounced anti-ICE protestors as “wrong” and praised ICE for being “very professional” and for “perform[ing] an essential function in keeping our borders secure.” Gina Ortiz Jones, candidate in Texas, combined meaningless statements about diversity and the “American dream” with the threat that “our nation’s border security cannot be compromised” and “we need smart, responsible immigration policy reform that protects the security of Americans.”

Organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America claim the anti-immigrant, pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist Democratic Party can be pressured “to the left” despite the fact that it is responsible for passing all of the major laws laying the basis for mass deportation. In a June 29 article titled “How to Abolish ICE,” the DSA-backed *Jacobin* magazine demanded its readers pressure the Democrats:

“Democrats should support abolishing ICE simply for its raw politics: it materially improves the lives of immigrants, who are by and large a Democratic constituency. ... Even if attempts to shrink the agency

don’t succeed in the short term, it is worth drawing a line and demanding that congressional Democrats say which side they are on. As more Democrats come to our side, abolishing ICE will inch toward becoming a reality.”

The Democratic Party’s “constituency” is not the masses of workers and young people who are repulsed by Trump’s fascistic attacks on immigrants, it is the Wall Street banks, the military-intelligence apparatus, and the ICE and CBP agents their candidates are praising in the lead-up to the election.

A Democratic-controlled Congress will pledge its willingness to collaborate with Trump’s immigration policies, echoing Senator Bernie Sanders’ January 2018 statement: “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.”

Seventeen years since September 11, 2001, both parties repeat the tired lie that “national security” and “border security” justify the evisceration of basic democratic rights. A powerful, mass movement of the working class is required to sweep the ruling class from power, end their wars, expropriate their wealth, abolish the borders and guarantee the right of all workers to travel the planet unharmed.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact