

Eighty-three abducted by ICE across Wisconsin in four days

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Four days of fear and anxiety have rattled workers, immigrants and young people throughout Wisconsin as anti-immigrant raids continued throughout the state. The full scope of the militaristic raids was made clear after ICE released a press release on September 25, gloating that 83 “criminal aliens” were kidnapped by ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) agents from their homes and worksites.

In response to reports of agents in the area, immigrant workers stayed home from work Monday, forcing local restaurants to close. Joining their parents, some undocumented students skipped school, as reports of armed agents lurking near schools rippled through social media and the community.

Relishing in the chaos and uncertainty it had caused, ICE remained silent over the weekend as armed agents conducted “targeted raids” in over 14 Wisconsin counties. There were 20 arrests in Dane, 15 in Milwaukee, and nine in Brown County. Extending its tendrils throughout the state, ICE made its presence felt in rural counties, with six arrests in centrally located Marathon county, seven arrests in northern Taylor county and four more in northeastern Trempealeau county.

The arrest lists employed by ICE, which still have not been made public, targeted immigrants from eight different countries, including, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam. Of those arrested, 16 had no criminal records, while 21 were guilty of “re-entering” after being deported previously. As of this writing, ICE has yet to publish the names of those kidnapped, adding that a “searchable database” will be available on their website within “48-72 hours.”

School districts in Dane county, including Verona Area School District and Madison Metropolitan School

District, responded to students and parents fearful of deportation agents waiting to ambush immigrants. Posting messages on social media as well as emailing parents, the districts acknowledged that raids had targeted students as well as “parents and family members,” but that ICE agents were “not permitted on school grounds, sidewalks, or on District parking lots, without a court order or a subpoena.”

Workers and parents, outraged at this barbaric hunting down of human beings, offered solidarity and services to those affected. Volunteers have stepped forward to offer rides, food, school supplies, as well as daycare services, as breadwinners were kidnapped throughout the weekend.

Madison Mayor Paul Soglin appeared Monday before local media, workers and immigrant rights groups, chastising ICE for its lack of communication, before again appealing for more coordination between local government and the federal agency.

Soglin recognized that ICE had jurisdiction to conduct the raids, but offered suggestions for the next round of targeted kidnappings, “...if you want credibility, and if you’re truly committed to a safe community you’ll ask us before you do anything.”

Representative Mark Pocan, a Democrat from Wisconsin’s 2nd District, spoke after the mayor. Echoing Soglin’s remarks, Pocan also appealed for coordination with the deportation apparatus. Pocan, flanked by police officers and Dane County Sheriff Mahoney, reminisced about the supposedly halcyon days when the deportation agency was founded in 2003, imploring ICE to return to its “mission.” Pocan stated that ICE was a “growingly rogue agency—it’s significantly off its mission. If we remember why it was created, after 9/11, ICE was created to protect us domestically, from terrorism.”

ICE's objective purpose has never been to protect "us" from terrorism. A subsidiary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ICE, along with Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), has been used to imprison, harass and deport workers for over 15 years. As stated in a 2003 DHS report titled "ENDGAME Office of Detention and Strategic Removal Plan 2003-2012," the goal of this bureaucracy was always the "removal of all removable aliens." These agencies continue to gauge their "success" on their ability to remove "100 percent" of "aliens" residing in the United States "as quickly as possible."

Despite Pocan's deliberate obfuscations about ICE's purpose, as the November elections draw near, Democratic "progressives" like Pocan are no longer calling for the abolition of ICE. Instead, Democrats, including Pocan and Soglin, are advocating empty "reforms" that will ensure the continued deportation and jailing of immigrants, while class-based restrictions are imposed on workers globally.

Cynically using the latest raids to boost their electoral prospects, these Democratic candidates appeal to immigrant rights groups such as *Voces de la Frontera* to mobilize besieged constituents to "remember in November" and vote for Democrats. The carrot dangled in front of workers is that the Democrats will pass "meaningful immigration reform," such as the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act. This is the same Democratic Party that did not pass the DREAM Act while the "Deporter-in-Chief" Barack Obama was president with a super-majority in Congress.

The defense of immigrant and native born workers' rights will not be gained at the ballot box by voting for the same Democrats that have worked hand-in-glove with the Republicans, establishing and enlarging the deportation apparatus. The fight to keep families together, and not incarcerated, requires all workers to unite against their common class enemy and oppose the two parties of capital.



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