

Democrats line up behind Trump's war on immigrants

NY Times demands: "Give Trump his border money"

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The victory of the Democratic Party in last November's congressional elections has done nothing to halt Trump's police state assault on immigrants. On the contrary, the Democrats, having taken control of the House of Representatives, have shifted further to the right and lined up more openly behind the administration's anti-immigrant policies.

Perhaps the clearest expression of this shift to date is the lead editorial in Monday's print edition of the *New York Times*. Headlined "Give Trump His Border Money," the statement demands that Congress approve the request sent by the White House to Congress last week for an additional \$4.5 billion in "emergency" funding, ostensibly to manage the surge in the number of refugees from Central America crossing into the US to seek asylum.

Summing up what has become the mantra of both big business parties and the whole of the corporate media, the editorial begins, "President Trump is right: There is a crisis at the southern border."

The *Times* goes on to make the cynical and dishonest argument that the money Trump is requesting is not for his border wall, but to deal with the "humanitarian crisis of overcrowding, disease and chaos." It cites poverty and violence in the refugees' homelands as the cause of the border surge, but remains silent on the US government's history of imperialist exploitation and intervention in Central America, well as the Trump administration's illegal refusal to process asylum claims and its dispatch of troops to turn the US-Mexican border into a militarized no-man's land.

Nor does it mention Trump's authoritarian declaration of a national emergency on the border and his allocation of Pentagon funds to expand his border

wall, in defiance of Congress and the US Constitution. Or his more recent moves in defiance of international and US law to effectively deny refugees the right to file for asylum and strip immigrants caught up in the US immigration system of their habeas corpus rights. Nor does it note last month's purge of the Department of Homeland Security, carried out to move, as Trump put it, in a "tougher direction" on the border.

Echoing the "human rights" imperialist pretexts used to justify neo-colonial wars in Iraq, Libya and Syria, the editorial declares: "Something needs to be done. Soon." It then demands, expressing the position of the Democratic congressional leadership, that recalcitrant House Democrats end their "political gamesmanship" and "finger-pointing" and give Trump the money he is demanding to shore up his anti-immigrant campaign.

Far from using its control of the House to seriously oppose Trump's war on immigrants, the Democratic leadership, beginning with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, has repeatedly rejected the launching of impeachment proceedings against Trump. Their major consideration is not the virtual certainty that the Republican-controlled Senate would refuse to convict Trump, or the fact that even if he were removed he would be replaced by his equally reactionary vice president, Mike Pence, but rather that a protracted impeachment process might provide an opening for mass working class opposition to Trump to take an independent form and move in an anti-capitalist direction.

Just last week, Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer emerged from a closed-door White House meeting with Trump to hail the meeting as "productive" and reiterate their eagerness to work with

the White House. This came one day after Trump's memorandum ordering the imposition of asylum application fees and the use of border cops to determine whether applicants have a "credible fear" of injury or death in their homeland. It also followed an op-ed column by the *Times*' Thomas Friedman supporting Trump's border wall and Bernie Sanders' attack on any policy of "open borders."

Meanwhile, there is mounting violence and misery along the southern border of the US. Last week, the Border Patrol recovered the body of a ten-month old infant and declared two other children and a man to be missing following the capsizing of a raft bearing nine people seeking to cross the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass, Texas. The missing include a boy and girl, both age 7, who were part of group of immigrants from Honduras.

In fiscal 2018, border agents recorded 283 deaths along the US-Mexico border, including drownings, accidents and the discovery of human remains. This grisly statistic is down from a peak of 492 recorded deaths in 2005.

These deaths do not include immigrants who have died in the detention camps or while in the care of the US government, such as the 16-year-old Guatemalan boy who died last week while hospitalized with a brain infection.

Two new giant "tent cities" to house hundreds of undocumented immigrants were opened last week in Texas, one near El Paso and the other in the state's Rio Grande Valley next to the Donna-Rio Bravo international bridge. The camps are meant to house immigrants for no more than 72 hours, until families are broken up and taken away by either Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Many of the ICE detention centers are called "iceboxes" or "hieleras" by the immigrants because of the freezing temperatures they endure while detained inside them. Physical abuse and sexual violence are rampant in the camps and immigrants may be detained for many days, not just 72 hours.

One tent city in Texas was found by the American Civil Liberties Union in 2014 to have problems with bug infestations, overcrowding, overflowing sewage, extreme temperatures and rotten food.

None of the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates have made a major issue of Trump's immigration

policies. The bipartisan character of the war on immigrants was underscored on Sunday when Trump named Mark Morgan as the new permanent head of ICE. Morgan will replace former acting director Ronald Vitiello, who resigned after Trump refused to make him the permanent head as part of his purge of the immigration apparatus.

Morgan was head of the Border Patrol during the last six months of the Obama administration, which carried out the highest number of deportations in US history. Morgan has denounced Congress for failing to gut the so-called Flores Settlement, which limits the length of time the government can detain immigrant children. He is also on record supporting Trump's proposal to send undocumented immigrants detained by ICE to "sanctuary cities."



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