

# Trump expands network of immigrant concentration camps

Eric London  
11 June 2019

The mounting scale of the US government's attack on immigrants is a warning that the Trump administration, without opposition from the Democratic Party, is adopting an official state policy of physical violence and mass, indefinite detention.

The US government arrested 144,000 immigrants in the month of May and is detaining 400,000 people per year, including 41,000 unaccompanied children, enough to fill Chicago's Wrigley Field. On any given night, there are now 48,000 immigrants and an additional 13,000 unaccompanied children sleeping in detention beds.

Another 10,000 people are currently living under tarps in makeshift camps on the Mexican side of the border, where, in flagrant violation of international law, they are being held as they await adjudication of their asylum applications in the US.

There are 4,000 US soldiers deployed on the border, and on Friday the Pentagon announced it is building three sprawling compounds on isolated military bases to hold between 3,000 and 4,000 immigrant children who will be housed in tents encircled by razor wire.

Particularly sinister is the fact that the government has allowed 31 immigrants to die in captivity since 2017, including seven children. In addition, the administration will no longer provide education, legal assistance or outdoor recreation for detained children.

Virtually abandoned is the pretense that immigrant children are being held for processing. Now these children, some of whom are infants, are being openly held for punishment.

In Saturday's *Los Angeles Times*, writer Jonathan Katz referred to a "growing system of concentration camps," calling them "places where people are being tortured and left to die." The article, titled, "Call immigration detention centers what they really are: concentration camps," warned: "Even the Nazis' camps started out small, housing criminals, Communists and opponents of

the regime. It took five years to begin the mass detention of Jews. It took eight, and the outbreak of a world war, for the first extermination camps to open."

In a country where the population looks on fascism with hatred, and where the vast majority of people are either immigrants or the grandchildren or great grandchildren of immigrants, Trump will not be able to massively expand his network of concentration camps or continue killing immigrants without provoking widespread opposition from below. Repeated polls show that the Trump administration's attacks on immigrants are unpopular. There is no American official more despised than Stephen Miller, the neo-Nazi architect of Trump's immigration crackdown.

These fascist policies are being implemented under conditions where US troops are deployed on American soil and the White House has declared a "national emergency"—Trump's increasingly preferred method of rule. On Friday, he announced a deal with Mexico that will seal Mexico's southern border with Guatemala and result in the effective revocation of the right to asylum.

Powerful factions of the ruling class that back the Democratic Party have accepted Trump's fascist attacks on immigrants and are urging congressional Democrats to support the expanding crackdown.

On June 8, the day after Trump's deal with Mexico, the *Washington Post* published an editorial board statement titled "How Trump and Congress can really fix our immigration problems." The statement is based on the racist premise, promoted by Miller and Trump, that refugees fleeing violence are "perversely" using their children as pawns.

The newspaper, owned by Amazon's multibillionaire CEO Jeff Bezos, writes: "A concatenation of court rulings, congressional inaction and administration failures has created a perverse incentive for migrants to cross the border with children. They claim asylum; a swamped

court system postpones their case for years; the government does not have the facilities or the legal right to hold them; so they are ‘paroled’ into the United States for an extended period.”

The *Post* calls for a system that would reject applications “quickly” so that “word would get out and fewer families would come.” The newspaper demands that the government “strengthen the border regime” and “impose real penalties on employers who hire undocumented immigrants.”

The *New York Times* published a similar editorial statement on June 9, titled “When will Congress get serious about the suffering at the border?” The editorial accepts the fraudulent claim by the Trump administration that the border is being overrun and that the solution is to massively fund the border police and immigration agencies and increase the number of detention beds.

Feigning concern over poor conditions in the detention facilities, the *Times* defends Trump’s decision to eliminate English classes, outdoor sports and legal aid for immigrant children. “Administration critics called the move ‘cruel’ and ‘illegal,’ but the financial reality is that the agency is overwhelmed,” it writes.

The newspaper demands that Congress “stop dithering and pass emergency funding” for border security. It denounces the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Progressive Caucus for insisting on a “hard line” in negotiations. It further declares that “the broader problem is that many Democrats have come to view the administration as untrustworthy, and they are loath to hand over one more penny for anything to do with immigration.” By the *Times*’ cynical logic, the way to lessen immigrants’ suffering is to hand billions more dollars to their sadistic jailers.

The *Post* and the *Times* are two of the loudest mouthpieces of the Democratic Party’s campaign to label Trump as a stooge of Russia. The hysterical tone they employ to denounce Trump for refusing to “protect our democracy” from “Russian interference” stands in stark contrast to their tacit support for Trump’s proposal that “our democracy” include a network of concentration camps. Since his inauguration, the Democratic Party has based its opposition to Trump chiefly on concerns within the ruling elite that Trump is an incompetent manager of the foreign policy agenda of US imperialism. Above all, the Democratic Party fears the growth of left-wing social opposition from below.

The self-professed “socialists” in the Democratic Party have also tacitly supported Trump’s anti-immigrant

policies. On CNN’s *Face the Nation* on Sunday, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders called for “expedit[ing] the asylum process” by hiring “a whole lot more” prosecutors and judges. He has repeatedly declared his opposition to open borders and warned of impoverished immigrants driving down the wages of native-born US workers. Sanders’ nationalism is the exact opposite of socialism.

New York Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, months ago dropped her pre-election call to “abolish ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)” and has remained silent on the US-Mexico agreement.

Tens of millions across the world are fleeing the impact of imperialist wars waged by the US ruling class. In the case of Central America, *one percent* of the total population of both Honduras and Guatemala has fled through Mexico to the US in the first six months of 2018 to escape the devastating impact of over a century of imperialist exploitation.

The Socialist Equality Party calls for the broadest mobilization of the working class and young people in defense of immigrant workers through strikes, protests, sit-ins and mass demonstrations. The front line of the fight against dictatorship is the fight to stop the government from carrying out horrific crimes against immigrants.

The SEP demands the immediate withdrawal of all troops from the US-Mexico border and the dismantling of all border barriers and checkpoints. All immigrants who so desire must be immediately naturalized as US citizens, and those responsible for mass deportations must be put on trial for crimes against humanity. Workers of the world must be given the right to freely choose between relocating to another country or remaining in their homelands.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**