As Democrats give Trump billions more for border war

Image of drowned father and daughter sparks global outrage against US anti-immigrant rampage

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27 June 2019

The photo of a young Salvadoran worker and his 23-month-old daughter washed up on the shore of the Rio Grande has gone viral on social media and sparked world-wide outrage against the sadistic assault on immigrants being carried out by Trump, with the full assistance of the Democratic Party.

The photo of Oscar Alberto Martinez Ramirez and his daughter Angie Valeria, taken Monday by journalist Julia Le Duc, encapsulates the human toll of the fascistic and dictatorial policies being carried out by the Trump administration. The two victims succumbed to the powerful currents of the swollen river one day after having sought to apply for asylum, along with Oscar's wife Tania Vanessa Avalos, at the legal port of entry between Matamoros, Mexico and Brownsville, Texas.

The father and his daughter were among the many thousands of Central American workers fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries, the legacy of a century of US imperialist subversion and exploitation. The young family was prevented from applying for asylum as a result of Trump's "metering" policy, which effectively strips immigrants of their internationally guaranteed asylum rights by forcing them to wait in Mexico for weeks or months in sordid, prison-like camps. The family then decided to risk the dangerous river crossing. Vanessa Avalos could only watch in helpless horror from the Mexican side as her husband and daughter drowned.

The image has been published in newspapers around the world, intensifying the popular hatred, including among American workers and youth, for the Trump government.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued a denunciation of the Trump administration, comparing the photo to the picture of the three-year-old refugee child Aylan Kurdi, who drowned in the Mediterranean and whose body washed up on a beach in Turkey in 2015. The comparison underscored the international character of the attack on immigrants being carried out by capitalist governments across Europe and elsewhere. This includes Mexico, where Mexican President Lopez Obrador has mobilized 20,000 national guardsmen to serve as Trump's anti-immigrant enforcers on the Mexican side of the border.

Commissioner Filippo Grandi said, "The deaths of Oscar and Valeria represent a failure to address the violence and desperation pushing people to take journeys of danger for the prospect of a life in safety and dignity."

Also on the weekend, US Border Patrol agents found four bodies along the Rio Grande in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, about 55 miles west of Brownsville—one toddler, two infants and a 20-year-old woman.

In the most recent fiscal year, there were 283 deaths across the US southern border, according to US authorities. The real toll is much higher. US border patrol agents have apprehended 664,000 people along the southern border so far this year, a 144 percent increase from last year. Some 14,000 unaccompanied immigrant children remain in US concentration camps.

The Democratic Party has responded to the escalating war on immigrants by voting overwhelmingly to grant Trump another $4.5 billion dollars to build more detention facilities, shore up the US military presence on the border and otherwise strengthen Gestapo-like anti-immigrant agencies such as Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

On the same day the photo of Oscar Alberto Martinez Ramirez and his daughter was published, the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives passed a $4.5 billion funding bill that allocates $788 million for new CBP facilities to hold asylum-seeking families and children. It provides $866 million for facilities run by the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) where unaccompanied children are sent after they are released from CBP jails. It also includes $128 million for ICE.

In the vote on the House bill, all but four voting Democrats voted "yes." The four supposed "progressives" who cast "no" votes—Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib—did so only after having assured passage of the measure by voting to bring it up for a floor vote. Of the four House members who did not vote, three were Democratic presidential candidates—Tulsi Gabbard (Hawaii), Eric Swalwell (California) and Tim Ryan (Ohio)—who ducked a vote for crass electoral reasons.

Similarly in the Senate, which passed its $4.59 billion version of

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the bill on Wednesday by a bipartisan vote of 84 to 8, with eight senators not voting, the Democrats gave overwhelming support to the Trump administration. Only six Democrats voted against the bill.

Seven of the eight non-voters were Democratic presidential candidates, including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, Michael Bennet, Amy Klobuchar and Kirsten Gillibrand. None were prepared to register opposition to practices that have repelled millions of workers and youth who never thought such Nazi-like methods would be seen in the United States, and who, unlike the big business politicians of both parties, retain a deep commitment to democratic rights.

The Senate bill is even more overtly repressive than the House version, including fewer token restrictions on the brutalization of immigrants and an additional $145 million for US military operations on the border—a tacit legitimization of Trump's illegal and indefinite deployment of active duty troops to aid police actions within the borders of the US.

On Wednesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi telephoned Trump to assure him that the House Democrats were prepared to accept most, if not all, of the Senate bill's provisions in order to avoid a threatened presidential veto. The Democrats are eager to secure a deal before the week-long Fourth of July recess, which begins on Thursday.

As the Senate was passing its bipartisan version, Pelosi told reporters, "There are some improvements that we think can be reconciled." Democratic Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer said, "We could quickly have a conference, talk about those four changes, try to get them in the bill, finish this quickly and I hope that's what will happen."

The Democrats are rushing to give Trump his blood money under the absurd pretext that the measure is a "humanitarian" effort to help the children and families caught up in his anti-immigrant campaign. Last Friday, Pelosi telephoned Trump to plead with him to delay his plan to carry out deportation raids against 2,000 immigrants in cities across the US, assuring him that she would push through a border funding bill in the House.

She and the rest of the Democratic Party are petrified at the prospect that such military-style raids in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities will spark mass protests and resistance that could spiral out of control.

Trump agreed to wait two weeks while Pelosi and Schumer did his bidding in Congress. Following the call last Friday, Pelosi said, "As members of Congress and as Americans, we have a sacred moral responsibility to protect human rights and the lives of vulnerable children and families." She added that her bill provided "strong border protection."

This "human rights" treacle to justify Gestapo attacks on defenseless foreign workers and children mirrors the justifications used to support one neo-colonial war after another in the Middle East and Africa—wars that have destroyed entire countries, killed millions and created the conditions for the biggest wave of refugees since World War II.

Trump wasted no time shattering the lying pretexts about defending human rights, making clear what millions around the world already know: that he has no intention of using a penny of the money allocated by Congress to back off from his brutalization of immigrants. On the contrary, he intends to escalate the attack as a central part of his reelection campaign and the axis of his efforts to mobilize his fascistic base of support.

On Tuesday, CBP announced that it had returned 100 children to the holding facility in Clint, Texas it had evacuated the previous day after reports of squalid conditions and rampant disease aroused mass indignation.

The same day, while the House Democrats were preparing to vote for the administration's border war money, acting CBP Commissioner John Sanders resigned and Trump officials let it be known that the White House had selected acting ICE Director Mark Morgan to replace him.

Morgan, who served as assistant commissioner of CBP under Obama, has made no bones about his hatred for undocumented immigrants and desire to drive them out of the country. As acting head of ICE, Morgan had authored the plan for mass raids in US cities that Trump has postponed. He reportedly clashed with acting head of the Homeland Security Department, Kevin McAleenan, when the latter urged Trump to hold off on the raids.

Morgan spent 11 years in the Marine Corps and 20 years in the FBI. A government source told the pro-Trump *Washington Examiner*: "Ultimately, it's Trump's decision. McAleenan won the last fight, and now it looks like [Stephen] Miller's gonna win this fight." The anti-immigrant fanatic and fascist Miller directs immigration policy in the White House.

While out of government, Morgan appeared regularly on Fox News. In one appearance, he said of child incarceration, "They're not cages. They're actually really nice facilities."

He said of vigilante militia groups on the border: "Why are they doing it? Because they're there and they see what the rest of us are seeing, that the southwest border is being overrun. Border Patrol and other law enforcement entities there are overwhelmed and they feel like they have no choice."

He has also boasted of looking into detained children's eyes and seeing that they are "soon-to-be MS-13 gang members."

Morgan's defense of far-right border vigilantes who have illegally detained hundreds of immigrants points to the growth of a shadow immigrant police apparatus, backed by the Trump administration and sections of the state.

Former ICE Enforcement Director Thomas Homan, who has been widely touted to become Trump's "immigration czar" but has been out of government since June of 2018, recently gave an interview to "Fox & Friends" from the basement of his home. In the interview he denounced acting Homeland Security Secretary McAleenan as disloyal to Trump. He spoke while sitting in front of a Department of Homeland Security seal to give the appearance of being a government official.

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