

US Border Patrol agents joke about immigrant deaths in secret Facebook group with 9,500 members

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A report published Monday by *ProPublica* revealed that US Border Patrol agents made sadistic, violent and racist jokes about immigrant deaths in a secret Facebook group with over 9,500 members.

The *ProPublica* exposé came as President Donald Trump threatened mass immigrant raids after the Fourth of July. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of immigrants suffer brutal conditions in concentration camps operated by the fascistic Trump administration across the US-Mexico border, which the Democrats in Congress overwhelmingly voted last week to support with more than \$4 billion in funding.

Members of the secret Facebook group called “I’m 10-15”—a code used by Border Patrol agents to refer to the detention of migrants—made cruel jokes about immigrant deaths and posted sexually explicit images of Democratic members of Congress. *ProPublica* was able to link the identities of several of the participating members in the group with Facebook profiles belonging to Border Patrol agents, including a supervisor from El Paso, Texas.

When one of the members posted a news article about the horrifying image of a drowned young father from El Salvador and his daughter, the member questioned whether the photo was staged and trivialized their deaths.

The photo showed 25-year-old Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez, a Salvadoran migrant, drowned face-down in the Rio Grande river with his 23-month-old daughter Valeria. The mother watched as the two were helplessly swept by the currents. The death of the young father was only one among numerous immigrant deaths recently, including children and infants.

“If he dies, he dies,” said one member about another

news story about a 16-year-old Guatemalan immigrant who died in custody in a Border Patrol station in Weslaco, Texas. Another posted a mocking animated GIF of the Sesame Street character Elmo with the words, “Oh, well.”

In stark contrast to the dehumanizing attitude of the Border Patrol agents, the photo of the drowned father and daughter provoked mass revulsion and outrage internationally. It was the latest demonstration of the barbarism of the bipartisan war on immigrants being spearheaded by Trump.

The vast majority of immigrants who are being rounded up by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and detained by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are working class refugees who have fled violent wars and military and economic interventions by US imperialism.

Sociologist Daniel Martinez from the University of Arizona told *ProPublica* that the postings reflect “a pervasive culture of cruelty aimed at immigrants within CBP. This isn’t just a few rogue agents or ‘bad apples.’”

According to the *ProPublica* report, agents also threatened violence against members of Congress who were slated to visit one of the CBP detention centers in El Paso, Texas on Monday, posting sexually explicit images of the Democratic Representative from New York Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Recent reports over the last few weeks have also highlighted the systematic dehumanization and violence used against immigrants and their children held in mass detention facilities. The conditions are nothing short of physical and psychological torture and a violation of the most basic human and democratic

rights.

Immigrants, including children, endure conditions such as extreme cold temperatures, a lack of food and water, limited access to medical care, lights turned on 24 hours a day, lack of proper bedding and worse. Children as young as eight in camps in Clint, Texas have been forced by guards to take care of crying babies and sick infants in soiled clothing. They are not provided toothbrushes, diapers, soap or blankets while being crowded in unsanitary conditions.

According to NBC, an internal government watchdog in the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General warned of "dangerous overcrowding" at an El Paso, Texas facility as far back as May. Conditions were so terrible that federal agents feared riots and armed themselves.

The report stated that only four showers were available for 756 immigrants. More than half of them were kept outside and those inside were kept in cells more than five times the capacity. Cells that can only hold 35 people had more than 155 adult males, with temperatures in the cells reaching more than 80 degrees. With the cells being so crowded, most men were reported having difficulty sleeping.

Detainees had limited access to showers and clean clothing, with many wearing soiled clothing for weeks. The facility also had no soft mats for children to sleep on or any clean clothing. Some agents took the detainees to hospitals at least five times a day, treating immigrants for lice infestations, outbreaks of flu, chickenpox and scabies.

Civilian staff members, according to the watchdog report, were also buying food for over 1,000 people with their own credit cards.

These detention camps are viewed by millions of workers in the US and internationally as a revival of the horrors of history and the worst crimes of the 20th century. They are reminded of the mass murder of Jews by Nazi Germany in the Holocaust as well as the internment of Japanese Americans by President Franklin Roosevelt during World War II.

Even though the remarks of the Border Patrol agents in the online Facebook groups dehumanizing immigrants are revolting, the real architects of these policies come from the highest levels of the Trump administration, including the president himself who has referred to immigrants as "rapists," "drug-dealers," and

"invaders."

The spread of openly far-right groups online and off, among the American Gestapo and law enforcement, is a product of the rot of American capitalism and its political representatives in both parties. They are being led from the very top by figures such as Trump's fascist advisor Stephen Miller.

Other Trump cabinet officials leading the charge include Mark Morgan, a head of the CBP under Obama who has been returned to that position by Trump, who once claimed he could tell just by looking in the eyes of an immigrant child if they would become a gang member; Thomas Homan, the former acting head of ICE and current Fox News commentator who still presents himself as a representative of the administration; and Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services, who has pushed for the repeal of the Constitutional right of birthright citizenship.

While Ocasio-Cortez visited the El Paso facility Monday to decry the conditions and was the object of violent shaming and derision by the Border Patrol, she also bears responsibility for the crimes being carried out in these concentration camps.

Her crocodile tears notwithstanding, Ocasio-Cortez voted last week to allow a vote in the House to pass the Democratic-approved Senate bill to give \$4.6 billion for Trump's concentration camps. She has towed the line of Nancy Pelosi and leading Democrats in giving support to Trump's war on immigrants while feigning occasional sympathy for the horrendous conditions they face.

There is enormous opposition to these bipartisan policies among workers and youth. On Sunday, 36 protestors were arrested after more than 200 Jewish activists protested and blockaded a New Jersey ICE facility. Such opposition must be developed into a mass movement of the working class to defend immigrants and oppose both big business parties through the fight for socialism, in order to prevent the worst crimes of the 20th century from happening again.



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