

## Amid revelations of fascist network at Customs and Border Protection

# Ocasio-Cortez, other Congress members threatened by border police

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A delegation of more than a dozen members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus reported feeling unsafe and facing taunts and ridicule from Border Patrol agents during a visit Monday to immigrant detention facilities in Texas.

The Democratic legislators included Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who was specifically targeted in sexually obscene and violent posts on a Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents' secret Facebook page that was revealed in an exposé published Monday by ProPublica.

In the course of their tour of facilities, the lawmakers reported horrific conditions and abuse of women detainees at Border Patrol stations in El Paso and Clint, Texas. The provocative treatment the legislators received from Border Patrol agents at the facilities demonstrates that the fascistic sentiments of current and former CBP agents expressed in posts on the Facebook page are pervasive throughout the immigration agencies. President Trump, with the complicity of the Democratic Party, is cultivating and encouraging these forces as part of his drive to terrorize and persecute millions of immigrant workers.

This is being done in the face of broad popular sympathy for the immigrants and opposition to the erection of immigrant concentration camps. On Tuesday, thousands demonstrated across the country to demand the closure of the immigrant camps, a small reflection of the widespread hostility to Trump's anti-immigrant and authoritarian measures.

The Democrats are driven above all by fear of the emergence of mass social opposition, which would cut across US imperialist geopolitical interests and threaten to spiral out of the control of the corporate-controlled political parties. They, including the so-called "progressives" such as Ocasio-Cortez, have done nothing to mobilize the still largely passive opposition to the war on immigrants.

The episode at the border on Monday took place just days after the Democratic Party ensured passage of a bipartisan measure handing the Trump administration an additional \$4.9 billion to fund its border war, claiming it was motivated by a

"humanitarian" desire to improve conditions at immigrant detention facilities. Ocasio-Cortez agreed to vote to bring the border funding measure to a floor vote after meeting with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, assuring its passage.

The Democrats' humanitarian pretext was exploded by the threatening behavior of the border agents on Monday as well as Trump's statement, upon signing the funding bill, that he plans to proceed with military-style raids in major cities to arrest and deport thousands of immigrants following his July 4 celebration of militarism at the Lincoln Memorial.

Meanwhile, the toll on workers fleeing poverty and violence in Central America continues to grow. On Monday night, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that a 30-year-old Honduran man who was in ICE custody died on Sunday at a Houston-area hospital. Yimi Alexis Balderramos-Torres is the sixth person to die in ICE custody since October 1.

After leaving the Border Patrol station in El Paso Monday, Ocasio-Cortez tweeted: "Just left the 1st CBP facility. I see why CBP officers were being so physically & sexually threatening towards me. Officers were keeping women in cells w/ no water & had told them to drink out of the toilets. This was them on their GOOD behavior in front of members of Congress."

She told reporters, "I was not safe from the officers in that facility." Other members of the congressional delegation described CBP and Border Patrol agents laughing at the lawmakers and taking selfies with the Congress members in the background.

Trump refused to condemn either the fascistic Facebook posts or the provocative behavior of the border agents. White House spokesman Hogan Gidley told Fox Business Network, "I don't know what Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is talking about." He called CBP agents "some of the bravest men and women on the planet," and added, "They provided three meals a day to people who are here illegally and unlawfully, two snacks in between."

A Fox News report accused the congresswoman of "screaming" at border agents in a "threatening manner."

On Tuesday, Ocasio-Cortez responded by tweeting: “To these CBP officers saying they felt ‘threatened’ by me—They were literally discussing making a GoFundMe for an officer who attacked me on my tour.”

The ProPublica exposé reported that the CBP Facebook group, called “I’m 10-15” after the law enforcement code for “aliens in custody,” had some 9,500 members, identifying at least one supervisor. The page featured sadistic and racist jokes about immigrant deaths and sexually explicit photos, including one showing Ocasio-Cortez’s face being forced down to the crotch of a smiling Trump. Other posts called female Democratic lawmakers “hoes” and urged agents to throw burritos at visiting Hispanic Caucus legislators.

During Monday’s tour of border stations, Rep. Joaquin Castro, the chairman of the Hispanic Caucus, tweeted a video of several women under custody sitting on the floor at a station in El Paso, one of whom said he had been denied medicine. He described women being held in cramped cells for up to 50 days without access to showers or running water for weeks.

Ocasio-Cortez tweeted that the women in one cell “all began sobbing—out of fear of being punished, out of sickness, out of desperation, lack of sleep, trauma, despair.” Representative Madeleine Dean described 15 women in their 50s and 60s sleeping in a small concrete cell, all of whom had been separated from their families.

Female inmates told congressmembers the guards woke them up at all hours and called them “whores.”

These conditions are just the tip of the iceberg. The inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security, the parent agency of both CBP and ICE, released a report Monday on a May 7 tour of a border station in the El Paso sector that found there were only four showers for 756 immigrants. Half of the detained immigrants were being held outside in the Texas heat, while those inside were in cells with more than five times their capacity.

Inmates were forced to wear soiled clothing for weeks and the facility was infested with lice and had outbreaks of flu, chickenpox and scabies. It warned that border agents were arming themselves against possible riots.

The report made clear that the horrific conditions are being imposed deliberately to deter immigrants. It said: “[Border Patrol] recognizes they have a humanitarian issue with detaining single adults for so long, but believe if they do not have a consequence delivery system, either prosecution or ICE detention, the flow will increase.”

An updated inspector general’s report released Tuesday included photographs of hundreds of migrants crammed behind chain-link fences at CBP facilities. It called the situation a “ticking time bomb.”

The promotion of fascist elements in the immigration agencies is being directed from the White House. Trump’s chief immigration adviser, Stephen Miller, is purging officials deemed insufficiently aggressive and replacing them with

others who advocate mass arrests and deportations and a crackdown on legal immigration.

Mark Morgan, named last week to replace acting CBP Commissioner John Sanders after the latter’s resignation under pressure from above, had authored the plan for mass raids in US cities while he was acting head of ICE. He has defended vigilante militia groups that illegally detain immigrants on the border and boasted of being able to look into the eyes of detained immigrant children and detect “soon-to-be MS-13 gang members.”

Morgan embodies the bipartisan character of the anti-immigrant policy, having served as assistant CBP commissioner under Barack Obama, whose administration deported 3 million people, the largest number in US history.

Last month *Politico* reported that Miller ally John Zadrozny was expected to be named deputy chief of staff at US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which oversees legal immigration, including asylum policy. He will join the team of newly installed USCIS Director Ken Cuccinelli.

As Virginia attorney general earlier in this decade, Cuccinelli supported ending birthright citizenship and denying unemployment benefits to workers who did not speak English.

Zadrozny is an official at the State Department who previously worked for Trump’s Domestic Policy Council. In 2009, he worked as legislative counsel for the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). The Southern Poverty Law Center has designated FAIR as a hate group because of “virulent and false attacks on non-white immigrants.”

These developments must serve as a sharp warning to the entire working class. The war on immigrants is part of a broader attack on democratic rights, including the preparation of state violence against workers who strike or protest against sweatshop conditions and a deliberate drive to establish a presidential dictatorship. No section of the Democratic Party will defend democratic rights, because that requires a struggle against the capitalist system.

None of the Democrats who are protesting against Trump’s fascistic measures call for the liberation of all those being held in detention centers and the right of all workers to live and work wherever they choose. This is the policy fought for by the Socialist Equality Party as an essential part of the urgent struggle to unite the entire working class in defense of its democratic and social rights.



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