

# Thousands protest immigrant concentration camps across US

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Thousands of people protested across the United States Tuesday with the slogan “Close the camps,” demanding the closure of the network of concentration camps in which immigrants are detained.

Organized by the liberal group MoveOn and organizations focused on immigrant rights and human rights more broadly, the protests were a small but significant expression of the mass opposition to the brutal treatment of immigrants at the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Almost 200 protests were planned across the US, in major cities and smaller towns alike. New York City, Boston, Minneapolis, Dallas, Las Vegas, Detroit, Houston, San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Portland and Seattle all saw protests, some with attendance in the hundreds. Protests were also planned in Stuart, Florida; Lubbock, Texas; Coeur d’Alene, Idaho; Lincoln, Nebraska; Biddeford, Maine; and Minocqua, Wisconsin.

Most of the protests were simply called “Close the Camps,” but others indicated a growing recognition that the barbaric treatment of immigrants in concentration camps had broader implications: “Cut ICE/CBP funds: No more separated families and children’s camps” in Denver and “Family separation is torture” in Miami are just two examples.

Many of the protests were in front of the offices of congressional representatives, largely demanding that they implement legislation to close the detention camps. Others were held in public squares or in front of detention centers, while at least one was held to “thank” supposedly pro-immigrant representatives for their positions.

*Newsweek* reported that protesters demanded “three things from lawmakers on Tuesday: to close the camps,

to stop funding all family detention and to reunite families. They also want members of Congress to bear witness to detention conditions and personally visit facilities this week while they are on recess.”

The signs, particularly handmade ones, express healthy solidarity with immigrants and opposition to the vicious attacks on their democratic rights. “No \$ for detention & deportation,” “The kids are dying,” “Put the real crooks in cages!” and “Never again is now!” were among the signs.

Protesters throughout the country likewise expressed outrage to the concentration camps and the broad-based support for democratic rights among workers, immigrant and native-born alike.

“It’s hard to look at this and not think about the concentration camps,” Genie Taylor, a child welfare worker who was protesting in Birmingham, Alabama, told al.com. “I think most people are appalled.”

On June 30, leading up to the July 2 protests, 36 activists were arrested outside of an ICE detention center in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The Elizabeth Detention Center, which is privately managed by Core Civic, was the site of a protest organized by Jewish activists and an immigrant rights group.

The protest was in part a response to the cynical semantic arguments put forward by defenders of the concentration camps, who take umbrage at the term and periodically contrast the Holocaust to the current attacks on immigrants.

A press release addressed this, reading: “Elected officials are spending more time arguing over the language used to describe these conditions than addressing the crisis itself. They claim to speak for us Jews, but they don’t. We refuse to allow politicians to use our trauma as a distraction from the mass atrocities being perpetrated by ICE and CBP at the border and

across the country.”

Protesters chanted “Which side are you on?” and held banners and signs saying, “Never again is now” and “Jews against ICE say never again for anyone.” Those arrested were charged and issued summonses.

A similar coalition organized a Tuesday protest in Boston attracting some 1,000 people, where 18 were arrested. Michaela Caplan, an organizer, said, “When we grew up hearing the words ‘never again,’ it’s referring to a moment like this.”

One sign read, “Anne Frank was turned away.”

It is clear that reports from inside the camps have shocked and horrified the public. The announcement that Fort Sill in Oklahoma, which was the site of an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II, would be the site of an immigrant detention facility, confirmed the resurrection of the worst crimes of the twentieth century and American history.

A June report from the Associated Press brought to light some of the torturous conditions in which immigrant children find themselves has also galvanized opposition. The AP report found children caring for infants, with one girl telling reporters, “A Border Patrol agent came in our room with a 2-year-old boy and asked us, ‘Who wants to take care of this little boy?’”

The protests express the growing opposition to the Trump administration’s crimes against immigrants, but as yet are led by forces tied to the Democratic Party.

Despite the posturing of certain of its members, the Democratic Party is hostile to immigrant rights. Its members in the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed two versions of legislation providing over \$4 billion to ICE and CBP to fund their xenophobic crackdown. Senate Democrats also voted overwhelmingly to fund the American Gestapo.

“Progressive” Democrats, including New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, voted against both versions, but only after ensuring that the House version made it to the floor for a vote.

While the Trump administration has escalated the attacks on immigrants, President Donald Trump is building on the policies of his Democratic predecessor, who deported more immigrants than any other president.

The Democratic Party is largely attacking Trump on the issue of his supposed closeness to Russia, rather than the network of concentration camps he is

constructing.



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