

Democrats back mass deportations

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Popular revulsion and anger mounted this weekend ahead of nationwide immigration raids announced by President Trump.

In the working class and among broad sections of the middle class, there is deep disquiet and shock over the horrific treatment of immigrants. But in the ruling elite, the political and media establishment is responding to opposition from below by closing ranks behind Trump and his fascistic advisers.

Tens of millions of immigrant workers and their families are living in fear as the state apparatus begins a military-style crackdown. Many immigrants have gone into hiding.

The *Guardian* reports that some immigrants are stockpiling food, because, as one Atlanta, Georgia resident explains, “Who knows when we’ll leave the house.” NBC News reports that many US citizens in immigrant neighborhoods have begun carrying their US passports for fear of getting swept up in raids.

The growth of popular opposition found expression in the larger-than-expected demonstrations that took place this weekend in 700 cities across the country. In many areas, neighbors are using social media to warn immigrants of police activity. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that residents of two buildings in Harlem turned Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents away during a raid on Saturday.

The opposite sentiment predominates in the ruling class. In Tacoma, Washington, hours after a nearby pro-immigrant demonstration concluded Saturday, police shot and killed a 69-year-old protestor who lit an ICE van on fire at a for-profit detention center.

On Friday, just hours before Saturday’s nationwide demonstrations, Vice President Mike Pence carried out a highly provocative, televised visit to two Texas detention camps. Flanked by guards and protected by a chain link fence, Pence viewed a warehouse full of immigrant men reeking of sweat and urine who begged

him to provide them with toothbrushes and showers. Pence declared that he “couldn’t be more impressed with the compassionate work that our Customs and Border Protection are doing here,” adding, “It’s time we moved past the harsh rhetoric of the American left.”

The aim of this stunt was to make clear that the administration will not be moved by social protest and to test how far it can go in counting on the complicity of the Democrats. The answer from the Democrats and the pro-Democratic media was to give the White House a blank check to expand its network of concentration camps, intensify its police state tactics and accelerate its program of mass deportations.

On Sunday, a group of congressional Democrats visited Texas detention facilities and repeated Pence’s praise for the guards. In editorial board statements published in Sunday’s print editions of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, the publishers of the Democratic Party-aligned newspapers effectively endorsed the anti-immigrant pogrom.

The *Times* statement, titled “All Presidents Are Deporters in Chief,” denounced left-wing opposition to Trump’s attack on immigrants. It declared that “the office [of the presidency] comes with the responsibility to enforce the nation’s laws—laws that require that the borders be secure and that some of the people who aren’t legally authorized to live here be deported, after being afforded due process.”

This “shouldn’t be a provocative assertion,” the *Times* continued, while condemning “inflamed passions” and opposing those advocating “greater extremes,” including “calls to abolish ICE outright.” The editors concentrated their fire on those on the left who are “flirting with radical changes to the country’s immigration laws,” and concluded by declaring that “the next president has to be ready to assume the role of deporter in chief.”

The editorial in Jeff Bezos’ *Washington Post*, titled

“Cynical immigration raids,” was placed below the lead editorial, a denunciation of “China’s concentration camps for children.” The *Post* complained that the planned deportations were “mainly for show,” and declared: “ICE is an enforcement agency and is within its rights to deport undocumented migrants who have been ordered removed after receiving due process of law.”

In the context of the raids and the widespread protests, these statements can be read only as endorsements of Trump’s police state policy.

For all their differences with Trump—mainly on foreign policy questions—the Democrats and the editors of the *Times* and the *Post* join with Trump in upholding the reactionary framework of “border security” and the supposed criminality of desperate workers fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries, the product of a century of US imperialist exploitation and domination.

They are united by their common interest in defending the capitalist state and the economic system that creates destitution at one pole and obscene levels of wealth at the other.

In contrast, when the Democrats view thousands of people in the streets, the threat of social revolution and the loss on their wealth flashes before their eyes. In the face of growing opposition from below, the Democratic faction of the ruling elite lines up behind Trump and demands the strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the state.

This is why House and Senate Democrats voted in June to provide Trump with \$5 billion to fund ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), giving the administration the funds it is now using to conduct raids and lock up children in desert camps.

These votes were not capitulations to Republican demands, but conscious political decisions to provide the police and immigration Gestapo with whatever legal and material powers they require to crush opposition and defend the capitalist status quo.

All talk of halting the persecution of immigrants by pressuring or appealing to the Democratic Party is hopeless illusion or deliberate deception. Those who advocate such a program—most notably the Democratic Socialists of America—are servants of the ruling class whose goal is to channel opposition back into the Democratic Party where it can be rendered harmless.

There is no constituency in the ruling class for the defense of democratic rights. Only the working class, leading healthy elements of the middle class, can defend immigrants from Trump’s dictatorial policies.

Regardless of immigration status, all workers must understand that *they* are the ultimate target of the anti-democratic methods used against immigrants. Concentration camps for “illegal” immigrants will soon be filled with workers engaged in “illegal” strikes and protests. The entire working class in the US and internationally must link its demands over wages, benefits and social equality with the defense of immigrant workers.

Socialist revolution is the only way to address the phenomenon of mass migration at its roots. Imperialist war and capitalist exploitation have decimated Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Workers and toilers of the world must be given the right to choose freely between remaining in their homelands or migrating as they please.

This means confiscating the wealth of the rich and providing billions of people around the world with housing, education, water, food, public transportation, access to culture and other basic social rights. It means dismantling the war machines of the capitalist governments and placing the transnational corporations under democratic workers’ control, so their power can be harnessed to meet human needs and not private profit.

There can be no national solution to the wars and social catastrophes driving tens of millions from their homes. What is required is an international movement of the working class to seize the commanding heights of the world economy and throw open the borders for all mankind.



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