

# Scores arrested in protests against ICE in New York City

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On Saturday, nearly 100 protesters were arrested outside of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office at the Starrett Lehigh Building in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. The protesters formed a human chain across both lanes of the West Side Highway beside the office building to draw attention to the facility.

The protest was called in response to the massive roundup of 680 immigrant workers at poultry plants in Mississippi earlier this week.

The protest lasted almost an hour, attracting dozens of supporters from the adjacent streets and brought traffic to a halt. Protesters carried signs that read: "ICE lurks here," "No Human Is Illegal," and "Close the Camps." Police arrested all those who blocked the highway. They were charged with disorderly conduct before being released.

About 40 protesters were arrested the following day at a sit-in at the Amazon Bookstore on 34th Street in Midtown Manhattan. The protesters chanted and sang hymns in Hebrew, connecting the anniversary of Tisha B'av—a Jewish day of remembrance for the persecution of Jews throughout history, especially the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD—to the plight of immigrants and refugees today. Hundreds more gathered outside the store when there was no more room inside.

Both protests were part of a series of actions led by Jewish organizations, mainly Never Again Action, which use the Twitter hashtags #Closethecamps and #NeverAgainAction. Never Again Action was founded several months ago in the spring of 2019 after images of Central American immigrant children being held in cages went viral on social media and reports that child separations were continuing. Around 50 demonstrations, attracting thousands of demonstrators,

were held nationwide, including in Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington D.C.

The demonstrations were only the latest in a series of demonstrations by area Jewish organizations in defense of immigrants. In June, 36 Jewish youth were arrested outside of an ICE detention center in Elizabeth, New Jersey, about an hour from New York City, after blocking the entrance of the facility and demanding the immigrants be released.

At the Amazon bookstore sit-in, several young Jewish protest organizers connected the historical plight of the Jews through the millennia as refugees and victims of persecution to the current dangerous situation for immigrants in the US. One speaker stated "The camps ... the separations, the round-ups, and deportations; none of this could happen without the web hosting Amazon provides ICE and the server providers it relies on, such as Palantir."

The group stayed in the store for over an hour, demanding Amazon stop its technological support for ICE operations. After an hour, police began to disperse the protesters outside and corral protesters from inside. About 40 organizers and protesters who refused to leave were arrested and boarded onto a Metropolitan Transit Authority bus which took them to a location where they were processed by the police.

One of the participating organizations, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, explained on its website why it was protesting Amazon: "New research shows that Amazon is helping ICE track, detain, and deport immigrants—in a big way. We've known that Amazon's servers host Palantir, the company that provides ICE with "mission-critical services," such as its case management software, and we've been pressuring Amazon to drop Palantir. But it turns out Amazon's role in the deportation machine goes deeper

than that.

“Amazon isn’t the only tech company doing this, but it has the largest role. Through intense lobbying of policymakers and law enforcement officials, Amazon and Palantir have secured a role as the backbone for the federal government’s immigration and law enforcement dragnet.”

Palantir is a software company in the Silicon Valley contracted by the Department of Defense for data analytics and is used for counterterrorism, a huge factor in its 2018 valuation of \$41 billion.

Amazon has extensive ties with many branches of the US military apparatus. Notable is its recent bid to provide the Pentagon with the services for the JEDI cloud computing, a proposed contract of \$10 billion.

ICE has been exposed for using of Amazon’s facial recognition software and artificial intelligence computers for monitoring the hundreds of immigrants in detention centers, technology developed to monitor Amazon’s factory workforce.



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