

# Thousands of children under age ten arrested every year in the United States

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The recent arrests of two 6-year-old children at their elementary school in Orlando, Florida has shone light on the shocking number of child arrests and detainments in the United States. A report by ABC News on Monday noted that nearly 30,000 children under the age of 10 have been arrested just between 2013 and 2017.

The arrest and detainment of children for the crime of acting their age will continue, and indeed increase, as social inequality worsens and the ruling class marches toward authoritarian rule.

The FBI recently released its annual crime statistics for the year 2018. While the report boasts that the arrest of juveniles decreased by 11 percent from 2017, the number of arrests of individuals under 18 still stands at a staggering 718,962. This number includes 3,500 children under 10, more than 38,000 children between 10 and 12, and more than 355,000 children between the ages of 13 and 16.

These statistics only account for 28 specific offenses, and the FBI's website where this data is available notes, "The program does not collect data regarding police contact with a juvenile who has not committed an offense, nor does it collect data on situations in which police take a juvenile into custody for his or her protection."

It is not clear under what circumstances the police would make contact with juveniles who have not committed an offense, nor is it understandable in what situation a child should be arrested for "protection."

Thirty-four states have no minimum age for delinquency, meaning that any child can be held criminally responsible for their actions, and 24 states have no minimum age for charging a juvenile as an adult for alleged crimes.

If it were not so sickening that tens of thousands of

children have been forced to undergo the traumatic experience of arrest and detainment, the breakdown of crimes for which these children were arrested would be laughable.

For example, in 2018, there were 155 arrests of children under 10 for carrying or possessing weapons; 340 arrests were made for "disorderly conduct;" nearly twenty arrests of children under 10 were made for motor vehicle-related infractions, including driving under the influence.

For the felony charge of aggravated assault, which is defined as causing or attempting to cause bodily injury to another "purposefully, knowingly or recklessly, with an extreme indifference to the value of human life," 145 children under 10 were arrested in 2018. The twisted irony of arresting a child for alleged "indifference to the value of human life" is further highlighted when some specific examples of these arrests are examined.

One such arrest for aggravated assault occurred this July, when a 10-year-old threw a dodgeball that hit another child in the face on a playground in Detroit. The charges against this child were eventually dropped, but this does not change the fact that a child was accused of and arrested for "extreme indifference to the value of human life" for playing on the playground at school.

While the FBI's crime statistics do not acknowledge the number of arrests occurring at schools, data from the U.S. Department of Education from 2015-2016, the most recently available information, shows that nearly 300,000 incidents at school resulted in arrest or referral to law enforcement.

The arrests taking place at schools are especially shocking, as most of these incidents involve children reacting as children do under difficult conditions. For

example, another egregious school arrest in 2018 involved a school resource officer handcuffing a 10-year-old autistic boy and pinning him to the ground after he had a tantrum because a teacher pulled him out of a cubbyhole where he was hiding. This year a crying 7-year-old boy was handcuffed for refusing to go to the principal's office. The available media reports of police abuses inflicted on young children are endless.

Also unacknowledged in these statistics is the number of children brutally arrested and detained in facilities operated by Customs and Border Patrol throughout the United States. Considering these children, the number of arrests of young children can be increased by tens of thousands.

Media outlets that have reported on the recent child arrests in Florida and on the alarming rates of child arrests generally have largely based their criticism on possible racism or lack of “proper training” of officers.

One youth advocate told ABC News, “None of this is shocking. It’s predictable when you don’t equip sworn police officers to deal with children and adolescents, who require a different approach. You have to be developmentally appropriate, and trauma-informed, and racially equitable. We’re not equipping officers to be that generally in the United States, much less when you place them in schools.”

Police officers will never be “equipped” to reasonably interact with any members of society, much less children. The police exist to enforce the unreasonable demands of the ruling elite. All of those who come into contact with these enforcers, who are encouraged and trained to exert ultimate violence, will surely face the full force of the capitalist class’s brutality. This is true regardless of age, race, gender, or sexuality.

The only meaningful way to understand the epidemic of police brutality towards children is to understand the class character of the officers who willingly arrest and detain children. These thuggish authoritarians do not serve youth, students, or the working class; rather, they are empowered by and serve the interests of the ruling class.

Therefore, police brutality will only cease when the ruling capitalist class has been stripped of power and the working class, the only progressive force in modern society, reorganizes society based on their own social needs under a planned economy.



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