Oppose Trump's mass arrest of 2,000 immigrants!

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As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for vice president, I denounce the latest mass raids and arrest of thousands of immigrants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and demand an end to the Trump administration's fascistic attack on immigrants!

On Tuesday, ICE announced the arrest of more than 2,000 people in a widespread series of raids over the course of six weeks; it marks the largest anti-immigrant operation undertaken by the Trump administration during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Twenty-four US cities were subject to raids, including so-called sanctuary cities; there were 125 arrests in Central and South Texas, and the sanctuary city of Los Angeles alone saw 300 arrests. The cruelty and injustice of ICE are well-documented, and the nature of these "at-large" raids is such that their focus is to arrest and deport individuals as quickly as possible, not allowing time for the proper observance of the burden of proof, and the easy circumvention of the constitutional right of due process.

The raids were conducted at workplaces, including essential businesses, but mainly at homes. Perfectly illustrating the cruel character of ICE, Henry Lucero, the executive official for enforcement and removal operations, explained many raids were intentionally conducted at the homes of immigrants due to the fact that much of the US population is spending a significant amount of time at home to do their part in reducing the spread of the coronavirus. It is clearly a strategic decision by ICE and the US government to conduct these massive deportation sweeps during a time of great vulnerability for tens of millions of workers and their families.

ICE, notorious for its misleading and shoddy bookkeeping, declared that approximately 85 percent of the arrests made were against individuals convicted of, or awaiting, criminal charges. According to their calculations, this series of raids saw more than 300 confirmed collateral arrests, desirable to the agency during targeted arrests.

In March, ICE issued a statement claiming the agency would focus on the apprehension of "public safety risks" in light of the conditions of the pandemic. This week, Lucero reminded the public that all "criminal aliens" supposedly pose a constant threat. "We never said we were going to stop arresting individuals," Lucero said, in no uncertain terms, in an interview, "We said we were going to prioritize and focus on those that are public safety threats. And that's exactly what we did during this operation." The agency emphasized in its statements its ability to arrest, detain, and remove all categories of immigrants, whether they are individuals with a criminal record, someone overstaying a visa, or an unaccompanied minor or essential worker—here, ICE does not discriminate.

In recent weeks, it has also been reported that, over the course of the pandemic thus far, ICE has had more than 660 children held in US hotels waiting for deportation flights out of the United States. The US government arbitrarily classifies unaccompanied children as "single minors" in order to circumvent pesky legal, and moral, obligations. These children, some as young as 10 years old, often have no means to seek proper legal assistance, no way to contact a legal guardian or parent, and live in a precarious state of fear as they prepare to face the cruelty of deportation alone.

Since the agency's acknowledgement of the pandemic in March, more than 5,400 detainees have tested positive for COVID-19 while in ICE custody, and there are six confirmed COVID-19 deaths. A significant number of outbreaks have also been reported among immigrants detained by ICE—19 detention centers reporting more than 100 cases, and several with more than 300 coronavirus cases. Despite the agency's supposed observation of the crisis, their concerns appear not to extend to the humane care of those in their custody. ICE is using the

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coronavirus pandemic as a mere excuse to conduct a devastating series of assaults on the immigrant population of the United States.

The United States' latest massive show of force against the immigrant population comes during a time of mounting opposition against the Trump administration and the barbarism of the capitalist system. Trump has overseen broad efforts to militarize law enforcement like ICE and has deployed hundreds of armed forces in major domestic sweeps of immigrant communities. These efforts are meant to whip up right-wing nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiments and bolster the conditions for the increasingly open adoption of authoritarianism and fascism.

The Democratic Party has been complicit in these efforts. The Obama administration established the large network of detention centers that Trump uses to imprison thousands of immigrant children, and adults, and deported millions of immigrants during eight years in power. The Democrats continue to ensure funding for ICE and the catastrophic immigration policies of the United States. Both parties actively support the inhumane and deplorable immigration policies of the United States and are directly responsible for the present immigrant crisis.

ICE's latest announcement in celebration of over 2,000 arrests comes directly after the Republican National Convention's (RNC) broadcast in prime-time of Trump's fascistic agenda. During the RNC, Trump declared that he would protect American citizens from illegal aliens, and warned against pro-immigrant sympathies, declaring "We will have strong borders. … Without borders, we don't have a country." The Trump administration's immigration policies are the outcome of the convergence of the racist, nationalist, and authoritarian tendencies of Trump and fascistic advisors like Stephen Miller. The assault on immigrants across the United States is a threat to the entire working class.

The mass raids and arrests have been carried during the one-year anniversary of the largest single immigrant raid on August 7, 2019, when an army of 650 ICE agents and heavily armed SWAT teams descended on seven poultry processing plants in Mississippi, arresting some 700 people regardless of status or citizenship. Anyone who could not prove they were in the US legally were caught up in the sweeps. The day after the raid, 500 children did not show up to school. Attorneys and advocates for the families who were affected say that the devastating aftermath continues.

A report on the anniversary in the *Clarion Ledger* noted that children are falling behind in school, their mothers are prevented from working and kept at home with ankle bracelets awaiting deportation, while their fathers languish in detention centers or have already been deported. The mothers and children rely on church handouts and charity for survival.

Terrifying raids where thousands are swept away in a matter of weeks, by an aggressive, merciless armed force were targeted at "criminal aliens" last month, but, as ICE made clear, any immigrant who is seen as a risk to "public safety" is eligible for removal. In the near future, the targets of these raids will be the working class in revolt against social inequality and the capitalist system. The potential for this can already be seen in the kidnapping of protesters by police in unmarked vehicles all over the US and the deployment of the Border Patrol's BORTAC paramilitary force in recent months to suppress police violence protests in Portland, Oregon.

The ruling class, as in its callous response to the pandemic, is working to normalize death and sweeping mass raids as facts of life in the United States. The interests of native-born and immigrant workers are one and the same; the attempts to stoke nationalist rage and fear aim to divide and weaken the collective power of the working class against the oppressive forces of the US government, and the capitalist system.

All of the problems confronting mankind are global problems, and the platform of the SEP is the fight for the international unity of the working class. We stand for a socialist policy of open borders: the right of all workers to live in the country they choose, with full equality and citizenship rights. The fight for the rights of immigrants and refugees is inextricably connected to the fight to unify the entire working class in opposition to capitalism and for socialism. I call on all workers to take up this struggle by joining the SEP or one of our sister parties affiliated with our global movement—the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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